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1870











# HENRY COURTLAND;

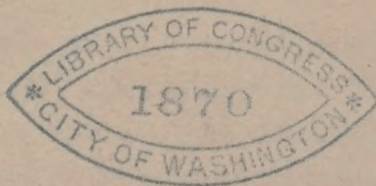
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OR,

## WHAT A FARMER CAN DO.

BY

A. J. CLINE.



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# HENRY COURTLAND;

OR,

## WHAT A FARMER CAN DO.

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### CHAPTER I.

IN one of those rich and beautiful counties in the State of New York, which border on the great lakes, lying east of the British possessions, lived not many years ago a highly respectable farmer, who had spent a lifetime in the cultivation of the soil and the improvement of his domestic and intellectual advantages. He had originally emigrated from a town of the New England States; but had so firmly taken root in the domain where it was his lot to be afterward cast, that all his recollections, and indeed all his attachments, seemed to be identified with that one spot alone. He had, it is true, during his long residence on the homestead, in which he possessed a fee-simple interest, made himself acquainted with all the localities and all the good citizens of the neighborhood around him; but although a man of intelligence and observation, his home to him was the world in which he chiefly delighted to dwell, and his own hearth-stone yielded him the dearest and ripest fruits of earthly happiness.

Henry Courtland was the name of the individual of whom we have been speaking. Notwithstanding his being only a plain farmer, he was by no means unmindful of improving the powers of a mind that was naturally quick, energetic, and thoughtful. He devoted a great part of the time he could spare from his ordinary duties to reading, and made much of his knowledge subservient to the practical purposes of a vocation which he preferred to all others, and which he was often heard to say would com-



pare advantageously with any other calling in the world. It was this fond attachment to the duties of his calling that made Henry Courtland a man peculiarly distinguished among his neighbors, and remarkable for certain characteristics which appeared to be almost exclusively his own. He was a strict disciplinarian in regard to every department of the property he cultivated with so much affection and diligence. He was on all occasions as quick and decided in his movements as the most skillful general of an army. He uniformly alleged that the tactics of a farmer were not unlike those of a soldier, and that whenever these were misunderstood or neglected, the consequences in either case were equally fatal. His rules of domestic government were imperative and unbending. Everything had to be done in its time—everything had to be in its place—and according to maxims which have received the concurrent approbation of mankind, his favorite doctrine was, that there is a time for everything, and a place for everything. Armed with sentiments and convictions like these, he was always in the endeavor to impress their truth and importance on the minds of others. He taught them to his children—he preached them to his neighbors—he proclaimed them as the orthodox creed of all useful and practical men. But he was no theorist. He was too prudent—perhaps he was too timid—to venture much on the problematical issues of mere experiment. He listened with respect to every new suggestion he found in books, or that was communicated to him in his personal intercourse with others,—but he often hesitated, gave a reason for his doubts, and preferred acting on the settled principles of his own certain knowledge, rather than on the vague supposition of that which had been only imperfectly tested.

To all these advantages, we must add that Henry Courtland was blessed with a loving wife, whose powers of judgment in relation to all the ordinary affairs of this world were scarcely inferior to his own. It did not indeed happen that she always coincided with her husband either in the familiar operations of his domestic management, or what was to her the less obvious conclusions of his deeper philosophy. Like most women who have a mind of their own, she was disposed to pay more deference to him as



her lord and master, than to follow him implicitly as her guide and teacher. She was indeed proud of her husband. She admired his tact, his energy, and his success in accomplishing much that seemed to be beyond the reach of other men. She agreed that he might occupy a niche in his own department of business, where she was almost willing to fall down and worship him. But then she reserved her own part of the household temple, where she herself exacted an undivided homage, which she felt little disposition to share with another, not even with her husband. She wished at least to be regarded as the priestess, if not the divinity, of those domestic rites which she had consecrated by her own wisdom, and which she had presided over by her own industry. Whenever these were interfered with by Mr. Courtland, or by anybody else, she felt as if they had received some little touch of profanation from the contact.

At the time our story commences, Mr. and Mrs. Courtland had advanced already beyond the middle period of life; and their family, exclusive of the laboring men employed on the farm, and the domestics who were chiefly occupied in the department which was superintended by Mrs. Courtland herself, was small. They were the parents of but two children, Percy, who was named after an old friend of his father, and Harry, who was the youngest. These children possessed their own peculiarities of character and disposition. In many respects, they were not unlike each other, exhibiting that family resemblance in mind, as well as in external features, which may be traced in all descendants proceeding from the same parents. But, in a variety of particulars, they diverged from each other like a stream dividing itself into two equal branches, pursuing different courses, but retaining strong marks of similarity—manifesting the same general features of resemblance, but sometimes exhibiting in their progress a very remarkable individuality, if not a downright antagonism.

It may be well enough to state here, as something which had a most beneficial effect on the minds of his children, that Mr. Courtland was a man who was strictly and unaffectedly religious. With him the feeling of religion was an affection, which had been growing stronger from his earliest years. It was not that spurious and superficial



bent of character which modern enthusiasm supposes may be obtained in a single day or a single hour. But it was something better, which was strong, enlightened, and effective, in proportion to the long and constant watchfulness and self-denial necessary to acquire it. It was not the religion of cant or of bigotry. Perhaps it might have been scarcely credited as orthodox by his less practical and more formal neighbors. But Mr. Courtland felt it to be the religion of the Bible—a religion which regenerates the thoughts and affections—which, with its transforming power, may be truly said to come home to the business and bosoms of men—which, while it constantly aims at a more perfect development of the moral character, acknowledges that it can possess nothing that is good and true, nothing that is joyous and happy, but from God alone.

With such a religion—plain, practical, and evangelical—and with a philosophy which received its light and spirit from this religion—it could hardly happen otherwise than that Mr. Courtland's children were happily educated. But this education was not labored and artificial—it was not what the world calls classical. Such a course would not have suited the views, and would hardly have suited the pocket, of our plain but thrifty farmer. His great object was to render his children useful and respectable in the world. He was unable to see that this usefulness and respectability were necessarily connected with what are called the higher employments and professions of life. Indeed, he sometimes doubted whether the reverse of this was not for the most part the lot of those who aimed at distinguishing themselves above their fellow-men. He was certain at least that this class of individuals was not the most prosperous and happy. In regard to his own children, therefore, his first great desire was to confer on them a solid but not a showy education. He placed them early at an academy, where they had the opportunity of acquiring the elements of much useful knowledge, and even a smattering of what are called the learned languages, but he did not go further than this. He made them to see that they must depend for a practical improvement of this knowledge on what he would be able to teach them at home. It was at his own fireside that he hoped to endow them with the fruits of all their previous studies.



It was here that he endeavored to place before them the real characters of men, as far as he was acquainted with them himself. Here it was that he told them of the great purposes and business of life—of the innumerable errors which mortals are everywhere liable to fall into—of the painful struggles of selfishness and ambition—of the sorrows and misfortunes inseparable from our best efforts to make ourselves happy—of the violence sometimes inflicted on integrity of character—and of the only safe protection afforded us in applying our principles of knowledge, and especially our principles of religion, to stem the torrent of evil to which our present lives are exposed. Nor were his efforts confined alone to the more prominent events and duties by which we are surrounded. He was careful to descend into particulars. He was aware that life is made up, for the most part, of what are called little things, and that these unimportant events are much more intimately connected with our happiness than is generally supposed. “The whole of our existence,” he would say, “may be compared to a stately building, composed of minute fragments of stone, wood, and other materials. Neither of these fragments, in itself, would seem to be of much importance, and yet the displacement or derangement of any one of them would be sufficient to destroy the security and symmetry of the whole edifice.”

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## CHAPTER II.

UNDER a discipline, such as we have attempted to describe in the foregoing chapter, it could hardly have happened otherwise than that many solid and lasting impressions were made on the minds of Mr. Courtland's children. But neither of them had yet arrived at an age when he could see the full force and measure of this discipline. Their father was made sensible of this from the opposition which some of his favorite maxims and wishes daily met with. Percy could hardly be persuaded that



the world was precisely what his father represented it to be. He thought it was more liberal, more confiding, and less selfish. He believed that men were engaged in the pursuit of many objects of real happiness—that the pleasures to be acquired abroad were much more refined than those which he enjoyed at home—and that it was only necessary he should make the experiment in order to come at once into the full fruition of his hopes and expectations. Although he listened respectfully, and even reverently, to the precepts of his father, yet he endeavored to persuade himself that much allowance must be made for opinions derived from early prejudice ; and that even his father's more obvious maxims of wisdom were better suited to his own age than to the age of vigorous youth and opening manhood.

Harry busied himself less with his father's opinions of the world abroad, than he did with the rigid rules which he had adopted for governing his little farm at home. It seemed to him that many of these rules were superfluous and unnecessary, and even annoying. Why should he be constantly subjected to a discipline almost as severe as that of a camp, when the whole object to be gained was merely the insignificant product of a few acres of ground, the preservation of an unimportant tree, or the prolonged existence of some trifling animal ? Besides, his father seemed to him to be embarked in an unending repetition of precepts, which only gravitated the more heavily on Harry's apprehension, as he found it impossible to erase their already accumulated force from his memory. His parent might possibly be right, but he did not think there should be a never-ceasing stretch of the same eternal vibration, or an endless recurrence of the same monotonous echo.

An important crisis had at this time arrived in the history of the Courtland family. The two children found themselves at an age to which their father had been looking forward with the deepest anxiety. Hitherto they had shared with him the labors of the farm, or had been busily engaged in prosecuting their studies either at home or at school. But a new experiment was now to be made, or at least a new and serious object of inquiry was to be propounded to their minds. This was no less than the im-



portant consideration of making a choice of a profession. Their father had always intended to give them the privilege of this choice, and he had so arranged the business of his farm, and the internal regulations of his family, as to afford them both an opportunity of making it at the same time.

The period fixed by Mr. Courtland for entering on the discussion of this important subject was the birthday of his eldest son Percy, who had entered on his twentieth year. It had been an invariable rule in the Courtland family to pay some attention to the birthday anniversary of each individual child and parent. On the occasion in question, an invitation had been extended to several of the neighbors to join in celebrating this recurring event. Henry Courtland was never more happy than when he saw or could render others happy around him; and the good cheer and good humor which pervaded his house whenever these periods of social hilarity arrived, were greatly owing to his own personal attention and example.

It is unnecessary that we should give a minute detail of the fitting preparations made by Mrs. Courtland on the present occasion. For many days before this important period arrived she was up late and early, superintending the renovation of her faded furniture, drawing forth from their hidden recesses a variety of conserves and fruits which had been stowed away almost for this single purpose, and arranging her somewhat costly array of tureens, platters, and dishes, necessary to give a becoming interest to the approaching festival. She was so indefatigable in these labors that Maggy, the housemaid, said the bustle attending them was fully equal to that of a regular wedding, which she of course had registered in her own mind as the great event of every considerate person's, and especially of every considerate girl's, existence.

The dawn which ushered in Percy Courtland's twentieth birthday was not distinguished by any extraordinary display of either show or greeting. No music was heard below the window, and no guns were fired at a distance. The lake, which could be seen from the porch of his father's antiquated mansion, lay still and unruffled—the woods around were invaded by no noise but the sweet singing of birds—and the fields and meadows had been visited



during the preceding night by no other influence than that of the refreshing dew which so brightly reposed on the grass and flowers. But it was a beautiful morning in the early part of June. The rosy tints came up from the distant horizon in a sky of pure light, without the shadow of a cloud to obstruct their rising splendor. In a few minutes the young blush of the opening day was changed into the calm serenity of a summer morning, and the sun shone out with a beauty and brilliancy but rarely surpassed in softer and more genial climates.

We have said that no extraordinary incident heralded the celebration of Percy Courtland's birthday. And yet it may be necessary to record an event, which if not remarkable, seemed at least to give a deeper interest to the occurrences by which it was distinguished. Percy had retired at his usual hour of rest the evening before, without experiencing any impressions calculated to disturb his repose during the night. It was not long before he closed his eyes and fell into a profound sleep. But it happened that he wakened up an hour or two before his wonted time of rising in the morning. This was an event which could occasion no surprise in Percy, since nothing is more common than to anticipate our usual hour of waking whenever we have marked out the succeeding day for some duty or allotment which does not fall within our ordinary experience. Having no particular engagement at that time which required his immediate attention, and finding that he could sleep no longer, he rose and walked forth into the open air. As we have already hinted, it was a beautiful morning, and Percy possessing a mind that responded most feelingly to impressions received from the works of nature, no one could have enjoyed its loveliness and splendor more than he did. He tripped along with an elastic and buoyant step, until pausing on the summit of a rising hillock, he fell into a deep and somewhat serious reverie. "The objects around me," he said to himself, "are truly interesting and beautiful. I do not feel as if I was a poet, and yet I entertain a most loyal affection for the hills and streams, the woods and fields, which everywhere meet my delighted eye. These I have been accustomed to from my infancy, but I cannot say that I ever grew tired of gazing on their simple beauty and grandeur.



They seem to preach to me a virtue and a truth which it is in vain for me to look for anywhere else. Why should I not love them? and why should I not continue to indulge in the enjoyments they are so well calculated to afford? But, no! I am forcibly reminded to-day that these fields, and woods, and streams, can have no lasting pleasure for me. Yonder rising sun tells me that I am now to begin, like him, a new day. But whether it is to end as it began in joy and loveliness, or is to be overshadowed by clouds and tempests, the future alone can tell. And yet why should I fear? The same Almighty Power that guides the sun in his course, when surrounded by shadows and darkness, can equally guide and protect me on my hazardous journey through life. I will go forward, therefore, with hope, with courage, and with confidence, believing that I am safe alike in the storm and in the sunshine."

The language made use of by Percy Courtland on the occasion we have just narrated was simple in expression, but was fervid and eloquent in feeling. The truth is that a moment afterward he was surprised at the depth and ardor of his own emotions. Although conscious that he had some considerable pretensions to knowledge and refinement, he was half ashamed to own to himself that the sentiments he had just uttered were either wise or becoming. But this surprise and shame were increased a hundredfold when, happening to turn round, he saw standing at but a short distance from him the person of Agnes Russell.

A very few words will suffice to give some idea of the character of the young lady whose name we have just mentioned. She was the daughter of Thomas Russell, a neighboring farmer, for whom Henry Courtland entertained a most sincere feeling of esteem and respect. Her mother had but recently died, and left this only remaining child, who was now about eighteen years of age, to become the solace and support of her father in the decline of life. Agnes had received a most excellent education. The mother whom she had lost had been a woman of uncommon powers of mind, while at the same time she was graced with all those amiable qualities of tenderness, kindness, and benevolence, without which the female



character may awe but cannot interest us. She had passed through and endured with fortitude a full portion of the afflictions to which our lot is exposed in the present world. One after another her children had been taken from her by the cruel hand of death, until Agnes was the last that remained of two sons and three daughters. On her, therefore, it was natural, nay, almost inevitable, that she would bestow the strongest marks of her kindness and attention. She had her early placed at school, where, under the immediate eye and guardianship of a loving and noble-hearted friend, she was able for several years to profit by all the advantages which a good school is able to bestow. But it was chiefly from her mother's own lips that her mind was furnished with a knowledge that was both useful and graceful. Mrs. Russell herself not only possessed a highly cultivated understanding, but was skilled in all the arts belonging to a neat and economical housekeeper. Into this refinement and these arts she took great pains to initiate her daughter. She endeavored to teach her in all simplicity, but with a sacred regard to the great principles of truth, the chief ends and purposes of her existence. She told her how vain were all the advantages of outward show and comfort—how worse than useless were ease and affluence—without the power of governing her own temper, and of beautifying the immortal spirit that dwelt within her. She impressed on her mind the solemn conviction, that it was of much more importance to form and mould this inward spirit to a sense of its everlasting beauty and dignity than merely to multiply those external advantages which go to gratify and adorn the body. But she was very careful not to denounce or prohibit a single pleasure that was really worthy of her regard and attention. She was especially earnest in recommending to her the cultivation of a taste for the sublime and beautiful in nature, and for all those productions of art which evidently borrow their effect from this source alone. It was thus that she endeavored to share with her the joys which she had woven into her own existence, and to render her independent of those grosser and more vulgar pleasures which are commonly the objects of our deepest anxiety.

It is only necessary to say, in conclusion, that Agnes Russell and Percy Courtland had lived on terms of inti-



macy from their earliest childhood. Whether the latter regarded anything he possessed in the world of greater value than the friendship of Agnes was a secret best known to himself. It is certain that their acquaintance was mutually beneficial. They derived from each other much valuable knowledge, and were often found pursuing their studies together.

As we have already hinted, when Percy, at the conclusion of his morning's soliloquy, saw Agnes Russell standing at a little distance from him, his mind was overwhelmed with surprise and confusion. A bewildered gaze was the only expression which his countenance indicated at first. This was followed by an awkward smile, which might have been succeeded by as awkward an apology, had he not been anticipated in his attempts to speak by Agnes herself.

"Why, really, Percy," she exclaimed, "this is capital! I long ago knew that you were an admirer of nature, but was never before informed that you were her secret worshiper. And then, to have you moralize in terms so pathetic and sentimental! But I must confess that was a part of the performance I did not like so well. The sentiments uttered were indeed true enough, but I admired their truth much more than their melancholy. And I am bound to say that I like this melancholy still less because it was uttered on your birthday."

After a pause of a moment or two, Percy seemed unable to do more than make the single exclamation, "I am afraid, Agnes, you will hereafter really believe me to be a sickly sentimentalist!"

"Not a sickly one, Percy," said Agnes, "but one who takes a sincere interest in that which is lofty, good, and beautiful. You surely have no reason to be ashamed of feelings like these, and there is much less reason that they should occasion you any regret. But methought I heard you speak of turning over a new leaf, and beginning something like a new journey of life. This was a part of your confession which I must be candid in saying I did not exactly understand. Do inform me, Percy, what meaning I am to take from it."

"You know to-day is my birthday," answered Percy, "and my father has long since resolved on affording both



Harry and myself an opportunity of changing our course of life, and entering from this time forth on some other business or profession, should we feel an inclination to do so. Of course, then, I cannot but regard this particular crisis as one of great importance to each of us. So far as concerns myself, the choice allowed me has already been made. In a few days I shall in all probability depart from under the paternal roof, and exchange the scenes and pleasures of my native home for the employments of a more busy world at a distance."

Agnes Russell was somewhat startled at this sudden declaration on the part of her young associate, although it might have been difficult for her to give a reason for the unexpected tremor that shot through her whole frame. But she was prompt in recovering her accustomed firmness and presence of mind. "I am not sure that I understand you," she replied a moment afterwards. "I had long ago supposed that you might possibly leave this neighborhood, and the home in which you were born; but I did not believe that you would stray far from the objects and scenes to which you have been so long accustomed. Tell me, Percy, what you mean by talking of a busy world at a distance. Your native State I should suppose would be a region of country sufficiently large to bound all your views, and to encourage all your projects."

"And so it may be," said Percy, "but that after all must abide the result of future consideration and experiment."

"Our poor Alfred," replied Agnes thoughtfully, "sought his fortune in a distant land, but his mourning friends have had too much occasion to lament the consequences of his rashness."

"Do not ascribe the conduct of your brother to rashness," rejoined Percy, "since you very well know that he was always esteemed for his prudence and forethought, and especially by those who had the best opportunity of judging his character."

"It is true, Percy," answered Agnes, "my brother did not appear to want sufficient thought and consideration when occasion required it. Perhaps I am wronging the memory of one who now seems more precious to me than ever. But it is certain that he wandered far from a home



that was endeared to him by a thousand tender recollections, and was lost."

"Yes," said Percy, "lost, as it is said, and yet nobody can tell how or where. Do you know, Agnes," he continued, "that I have always somewhat doubted the authority on which you predicate the belief of your brother's death?"

"Why, surely," answered Agnes, "the intelligence we received was as precise and certain as could have been expected by any person seeking for merely reasonable evidence; and the truth of this intelligence has since most sadly been confirmed by his subsequent silence."

"The gentleman who furnished this intelligence," said Percy, "could only judge of the identity of your brother from circumstances, all of which I have thought might truly exist without proving conclusively that the stranger whom he saw die in the manner he describes was in reality the person he took him to be. And as to Alfred's silence since that intelligence was received, a thousand events might be the cause of this, and yet your brother be as certainly alive as you and I feel ourselves to be at the present moment."

"Oh, Percy!" exclaimed the agitated girl, "how much would I give for the uncertain hopes which seem to flatter your own bosom. But you cannot feel on this subject as I do. My brother is dead, and my mind is conclusively made up to this sad reality. Let us cease from conversing on a topic which has so terribly afflicted our family. It is sufficient to know that Alfred found a watery grave on a foreign shore. This mournful event has been the cause of a double sorrow. I have reason to believe that my poor heart-broken mother followed her child to the spirit world merely because she felt how entirely desperate was the hope of ever again seeing him in this." Here Agnes buried her face in her hands, and for a few moments continued to weep bitterly.

Percy was young, but was not without a portion of that manly feeling which always seeks to relieve the female bosom when in distress. His gallantry would have been sufficient for this purpose if the object before him had been the most distant stranger. But he felt how much he owed to one who had been his companion from his earliest child-



hood—who was now endeared to him by the tenderest ties of friendship—who had a place in his heart which perhaps no other being on earth could have filled exactly in the same way. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that he should have been deeply affected. He was for a moment almost ready to mingle his tears with her own; but it was only for a moment. He rallied immediately afterward, and then with a firm voice said:

“I am sorry, Agnes, that any observations of mine should have renewed afresh that feeling of agony which I thought to allay by revealing my sincere impressions in relation to the circumstances which have caused it. But I find the wound is too deep to be healed, even in a very slight degree, by any interference of my own. It is better, therefore, as you yourself have hinted, that this sorrowful subject should be permitted to rest for the present.”

Here our two friends parted, and took their respective courses homeward.

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### CHAPTER III.

BEFORE Percy reached the door of his father's house, his ears were assailed by many unaccustomed noises, which now seemed to disturb the premises in all possible directions. In the barn-yard several urchins were occupied in dealing destruction among the poultry, whose loud shrill cries sometimes came up from the pursuit of the chase, and were again renewed when the work of decapitation was just about to be executed. In the garden two or three of the neighboring children had been set to gathering peas and other vegetables, not without a chattering so loud and vociferous as to send its echoes in all directions through the opposite woods. The space before the old mansion was made vocal by more than one *help* employed in burnishing the pewter and scouring the knives, preparatory to the approaching festival; and the sounds from the kitchen gave a still more decided evidence of the



bustling operations which were going forward for the same purpose.

When Percy arrived in the rear of his father's premises, and was slowly passing the kitchen door, he heard the lively voice of Maggy giving the word of command to a troop of busy but somewhat awkward outsiders in a manner that, under the circumstances, might have stamped on her character the qualities of a genuine heroine. "Stand back there," she exclaimed to a squad but newly arrived, and who were not yet initiated into the service for which they had been drummed up from the neighboring farm-houses, "stand back there, and file off into the cellar. Old Nelly Brooks will put you at something, if she is not herself too busy to attend to the wants of other folks, that will entitle you at least to a share of the fragments after the feast is over. And you, Billy Braxton, why do you pause there with your hands behind your back, as if you were snuffing up an execution instead of celebrating a holiday? Come, sir, tumble round and be busy!"

"Busy, indeed!" muttered Billy to himself. "A man might as well expect to be busy at his own funeral as to be busy here, where there is so much noise and extravagance that it is enough to scare the life out of one. Look you, Maggy, what would you have me do amid this everlasting confusion?"

"Why, I would have you hold your tongue, at least, Billy," said Maggy, "or, what is better still, hold this basket, while I fill it with crackers for the gentlemen who are expected to outwit the dinner bell by getting hungry before their time. Funeral, to be sure! What were you grumbling about a funeral, Billy?"

"Why, nothing, I vow and declare," said the veteran loafer soothingly. "But you know, Miss Maggy, that old folks are a little tender in their feelings sometimes, and can't so conveniently bear the vexations of life as you who are too young yet to know what the vexations of life mean."

It may be well enough that we should inform our readers that Maggy could no longer boast of that primal bloom the loss of which all females, whether in high or in humble life, are no less willing to conceal from themselves than from others. Billy Braxton did not seem to be ignorant of



this acknowledged fact in the history of female experience, and therefore with some degree of cunning had moulded his expressions to meet the demand on his flattery. His language, we have reason to believe, had its intended effect on Maggy, who, pleased with the idea of still retaining the full possession of her early youth, was now moved to reply in the following good-natured language:

“Why, Billy, you are old, it is true—at least you have an old look. But people are good to you (here, put these crackers in your pocket, for you may be hungry before your turn comes to eat to-day), and you ought to try to take the world as easy as possible. Supposing we should come to the conclusion, Billy, that you may yet live to dance at my wedding?”

“Right! you are right! I did not think of that!” exclaimed Billy, with much affected gravity. “You may have it all your own way. I might dance at your wedding, and afterward weep at your funeral. Who knows? But come what may, I will at least try to be merry to-day.”

Among the invited guests who on that day feasted at Courtland Hall, we must of course reckon Thomas Russell and his daughter Agnes. The farmer, as we have already mentioned, was the near neighbor and intimate associate of Henry Courtland, but his habits and disposition differed in many important particulars from those of his more thrifty and prosperous host. He had been exposed to many domestic afflictions, and had met with several severe reverses of fortune in the course of a pretty long life, that left their marks somewhat deeply impressed on a temper which once had been mild and amiable. His children had been taken from him, as we have already intimated, until a son and daughter were all that survived. In the midst of these difficulties and sorrows his son was induced to seek his fortune in California, whence news was soon after received of his melancholy loss from a vessel on which he had taken his passage to China. This unhappy catastrophe was shortly after greatly aggravated to Mr. Russell by the death of his wife, whose health gradually gave way under the severe bereavements which she had been called to encounter in the loss of her children. No wonder that he should now become discouraged. But in the midst of his greatest afflictions a light would break



round his path when he least expected it, and his friends often found him cheerful, and even gay, when only a few hours before his heart had been writhing in the deepest anguish. Thomas Russell was a Christian.

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## CHAPTER IV.

It is not necessary that we should give a detailed account of the many good things that were said and done, of the many sharp appetites that were gratified, or of the many personal peculiarities that were presented, on this memorable anniversary of Percy Courtland's birthday. At the table the utmost harmony and good cheer were manifested by all the guests. Percy indeed would every now and then seem to relapse into a fit of absence, but whenever this took place he was sure to be roused from his reverie by the kind interference of Agnes Russell, who was placed directly opposite to him at the table, and whose playful sarcasm, while it seemed to entertain the guests who sat on each side of them, afforded him no opportunity of forgetting the respect which was due to the company who had honored him with their presence. His brother Harry was less thoughtful and far more lively. He took great pleasure in seeing that all the young folks were richly supplied with the excellent fare that so abundantly covered the table, and was especially attentive to the more backward class of ladies, both young and old, who were too timid or too awkward to help themselves. Mrs. Courtland had enough to do to superintend the general conduct of the feast, and to see that each dish was properly replenished as its contents disappeared from under the attacks of her numerous visitors. Agnes Russell seemed more intent on entertaining the company with her conversation than on pleasing her own appetite, and her father was in so excellent a humor that, before the feast was over, he declared that many infirmities must, somehow or



other, have been taken from off his shoulders, as he felt himself to be at least ten years younger.

But Henry Courtland himself, grave as it might have been supposed he had grown from age, was the model instructor, if not the animating spirit, of the company. He felt himself privileged on this occasion, as on all others, to interlard his discourse with some remarks that fell in with the peculiar bent of his own genius, and which had reference to his favorite ideas on the subject of rural life and rural employments. "Now, you will readily comprehend," said he, addressing himself to his neighbor, Mr. Russell, whom he had deferentially placed at his right hand, "you will readily comprehend why I regard this birthday feast as one of which we have all a right to be proud. It is not, you see, my friend Russell, because my wife has taken uncommon pains to show her taste and skill in spreading it before us, though some credit is undoubtedly due to her on that account, but it arises simply from the fact that it is an entertainment got up by a substantial yeoman, as a farmer is sometimes called, yet one nevertheless sufficiently abundant, and sufficiently genteel too, to please a king and his courtiers, if they could only learn how to be reasonably satisfied. Now, I take it, there are two kinds of feasts in the world, more common than any others, but neither of which is the feast that I like best. One of them is of the high-pressure order, which refines and sublimates everything as if it had fairly passed through the chemist's crucible. Everything is melted down to the consistency of a macaroni, with no more substance in it than is to be found in the great toe of a pheasant. The other is based on the more liberal but less expensive principle of eating and growing fat. It caters for the vulgar appetite, which is almost always greedy, imperious, and insatiable. What it lacks in quality it makes up in quantity, and cares but little for the seasoning of the cook, so that it can have all that may be obtained from the shambles of the butcher. Now, my dear sir, you will admit, that in order to do the thing right, there is a proper medium to be observed between the two extremes. And who is able to hit this medium so well as the genteel farmer? Mind, I say the genteel farmer, because I am sorry there are hundreds of families in the country, who have an



abundance and too much of the good things of this world, but who have no more idea of what gentility is than a mole has of colors. Now such a feast as we have before us, I take to be the happy medium between the two extremes I have mentioned. Its essential qualities are not destroyed either by too much pressure or too much grossness. It is a repast which every sensible farmer has a right to enjoy, because it is neither too expensive for his pocket, nor too coarse for his appetite."

"You are a wonderful fellow, my good friend Henry," replied Mr. Russell, "for you are not merely satisfied with showing off the advantages of a country life compared with that of a residence in the city, but you must needs contend for the superiority of a country dinner over that of a fashionable one. Now, confident as you no doubt feel in the correctness of your own opinion, I cannot help thinking there may be more than one particular in which you are decidedly mistaken."

"How mistaken?" ejaculated Mr. Courtland. "Have we not equal fruits, superior vegetables, as fine poultry, and better beef? And have we not as much skill and taste in preparing them for the table? I tell you, neighbor Russell, the advantage is all on our side."

"You will admit," answered Mr. Russell, "that we certainly lack one very important ingredient indispensable to the enjoyment of every dinner, if not to its preparation. I allude to that feast of reason and flow of soul without which, it is acknowledged on all hands, that the most sumptuous entertainment can claim for itself no higher reputation than a mere vulgar indulgence in eating and drinking."

"Rather call it the feast of gluttony and flow of intemperance," cried Mr. Courtland. "In nine cases out of ten it amounts to nothing more. Now, I would not have this spirit to mingle in our country festivities. We could do better without it, and might perhaps, on most occasions, muster up as much genuine wit and refined argument as ordinarily grace the social gatherings of what are considered the more enlightened classes of society. I do not say, Mr. Russell, that as yet we have reached that point of perfection which I myself have in view, and to which I hope we are rapidly tending. But it requires for this pur-



pose that we should exercise our wits and assert our rights. The talents necessary to a display of this kind have been as liberally given to us as to other people, and it only remains that we should learn how to cultivate and exercise them in order that we may freely taste the full measure of enjoyment they are calculated to secure to us."

"There, Percy!" said Agnes Russell, clapping her hands with some vehemence, after Mr. Courtland had done speaking, "you see to what an elevated condition we quiet citizens of the country are growing! Not only are the old Arcadian scenes of happiness to be revived among us, but we are to be favored with a degree of intelligence superior to anything that now graces the most refined circles of fashionable life. Why, I am almost intoxicated with the idea of our future progress. If we continue to go on at this rate not alone will our neighbors in the towns and cities lying round about us be indebted to the country for food and raiment necessary to sustain animal life, but we shall in a short time arrive at a degree of learning and wisdom so truly excellent that they will apply to us too to supply the wants of their mental nourishment. Only think on it—the peasantry of a country feeding, as well as instructing at the same time the fashionable and genteel world of our large cities! Why, really, now, this would be a revolution and a conquest that would not only turn the world upside down, but I am afraid our own little heads into the bargain."

"I must change the subject of conversation now," whispered Henry Courtland to his friend, who had been listening to him with deep attention, but with an incredulous smile all the time beaming from his countenance—"I must change the subject of conversation now, or your mischievous daughter will turn all I have said into perfect ridicule." Then, raising his voice, and addressing his conversation to Miss Russell, who was seated at some distance from him, he continued to say,—

"Do you know, Agnes, that I have sent for your piano?"

"Indeed, Mr. Courtland," said Agnes, "I was informed of no such evil design on your part, nor can I perceive by what authority you have undertaken a task for the performance of which I am sure you never demanded my sanction."



"As to that," said Mr. Courtland, "I knew you would sanction whatever was thought calculated to administer pleasure to this joyous assembly. And I was well aware, at the same time, that if there was a possibility of your objecting to the measure I had in view, so great would be the burst of feeling against you, that you would be entirely overpowered by the unanimity with which others would approve the task I had undertaken. So you see, Miss Agnes, the odds are against you, and you are bound to surrender at discretion."

"But not without protesting against the means employed to overcome me," answered Agnes. "Nevertheless, as we have met together to-day to make each other happy," she continued, casting a significant glance of her eye on Percy, "it would be a waste of words to pursue this subject any further. I yield to the wish of the majority, if what you have said be their wish in reality, and express myself satisfied."

Our readers must excuse us from entering any further into the pleasantry and humor which distinguished several of the guests at this memorable feast. Both young and old endeavored to amuse each other, and to render themselves as agreeable as possible. If their wit was not so brilliant as at the tables of the lordly and great, it was much more innocent, and not unfrequently quite as surprising and pointed. Good sense and quick discernment are not gifts belonging to the highly fashionable and highly educated alone. Like the beautiful flowers that cover the broad face of nature, it often happens that the choicest will be found in places where they are the least expected to flourish.



## CHAPTER V.

WE will now suppose that our guests have retired from the table and gone home, after having quaffed some innocent beverage to the health of Percy Courtland, and wished him a long life of prosperity and enjoyment. Mr. Russell and his daughter alone remain behind. The latter had exerted her best skill to entertain her companions after dinner on the piano, and she was now seated at this instrument in a little back parlor, surrounded by Mr. and Mrs. Courtland, their two sons, and her own father. Agnes had become grave and somewhat serious in her manner, and a slight reaction seemed to have taken place in the temper of her father. But to a stranger, who might accidentally have passed into that little room, they would all have appeared like one family group, contented and happy under the same peaceful and friendly shelter.

It is not likely that any of her friends ever heard Agnes Russell boast of her proficiency in music, and yet those who were best qualified to judge were always willing to accord to her great skill in the execution of whatever she undertook. She naturally possessed a superior taste and discriminating ear for an art in which so few excel; and, although for the most part she selected her simplest performances when playing before her friends, yet every one acquainted with her knew that she was capable of executing parts that were much more elevated and difficult. But her own inclination often led her to indulge in certain favorite airs that were characterized by great simplicity and tenderness. On the present occasion she selected one of these as a finale to her whole performance, not merely because she felt it harmonized with her own temper, but because she knew it would touch a chord in the feelings of her friend Percy, whose heart at that time she seemed to read with much interest. The music she selected was that which had been arranged to suit those tender and pathetic lines composed by Burns when he contemplated leaving his native land, and was bidding a sorrowful fare-



well to his friends around him. Every tone and word, as she warbled forth the beautiful song, struck with melancholy effect on the heart of poor Percy. Agnes herself was deeply moved by the powers of her own music; and as she closed the performance, and shut up the piano, her eyes moistened with tears, which she found it necessary to wipe away with her handkerchief. Percy was scarcely less affected than his companion. He rose from his seat without saying a word, and, laboring under great emotion, paced thoughtfully up and down the room.

"Why, really, Agnes," exclaimed Mr. Courtland, who seemed not to be insensible of the effect her performance had produced, "I have often heard of the charms of music, and perhaps have sometimes felt its powers on my own blunted heart, but I am not sure that I ever before witnessed its triumph so completely in the warbling of a single song. Come! come! this you know is an unseasonable time for tears. We have been somewhat merry to-day, and I trust happy; and this kind of feeling ought not to be so soon disturbed by the somber music of a Scotch song, even if that song should have been composed by Burns himself. Why, only see! you have made Percy look as blear-eyed as if he had been attending the funeral of a fellow student, his nearest and dearest friend. Now, let there be an end for the present to this kind of witchery. We have something of more importance to attend to, that may as well be done at once. Percy," he continued, addressing himself to his son, who by this time was again seated quietly at the opposite side of the room, "have you forgotten that this is your birthday, and that we have assembled here this afternoon for the purpose of attending to some business which very nearly concerns your brother and yourself?"

"I know it all," answered Percy, somewhat demurely. Then, after a moment's pause, he repeated the same words again—"I know it all, and have attended here in obedience to your request, as I believe my brother has likewise, in order that we may learn your pleasure concerning the business in question."

"It is not every father," said Mr. Courtland, "who feels a proper care and anxiety for the welfare of his children. Too many parents, in considering how their offspring may



be best settled in the world, have little regard to anything but their own interest and convenience. Their great object, in most instances, is to initiate them into their own business, or into some other pursuit or profession by which they will be most likely to acquire wealth and honor. I trust, so far as regards myself, that I have not acted from such motives as these. My object, my dear children, as you know, has always been to fix you ultimately in stations where you would be most useful, and consequently most happy. It was my desire, indeed, that you should remain for some time under the paternal roof, and subject to my own control, which has caused both of you, before leaving home, to be considerably advanced in life. But during all this time, I was not unmindful of the duty which I owed you as your father and best earthly friend. I was very careful to provide you with such an education as would best qualify you for some other employment, should you see proper to relinquish the one in which Providence has seen fit to place you for the present. Had you not been thus instructed, it would have been better to send you away from home much earlier, if there had been a desire for such a change on your part. But now you may avail yourself of the advantages of both knowledge and experience. To-day, my children, as you were apprised some months ago, I freely give you your choice of selecting a business for yourselves. You know what my choice has been, and would be, if I had to make it over again. But I do not wish you to be influenced by my own preferences. I am a farmer, and am somewhat proud of the calling to which I have devoted the best energies of my life. Is it your wish to continue in the like employment, or would you prefer exchanging it for some other? You are the younger, Harry, and I shall expect an answer from you first. There will then be the less danger that your choice should be made from anything that might fall from the lips of your brother."

"I have tried to look at the question on all sides," said Harry, "and must confess that I have felt some difficulty in coming to a final conclusion. If I had consulted my pride merely, I think I would exchange my present business for some other. But if I consider my future happiness—my bodily health, my moral improvement, my ease



of mind, and perhaps my real usefulness in life—I am inclined to believe that I ought to be content with what I have.”

“As to the mere question of dignity,” answered his father, “I do not think you ought to waste many thoughts about it. Consider, my child, what it is that has lowered the independent worker of the soil in the estimation of the world at large. It cannot be because his position in life is meaner, or because the duties he has to perform are clumsier and coarser than those of most other men. The habits and employments of many of our mechanics are a thousand times more vulgar than are those of the farmer. Indeed, no other calling or profession in the world sustains a more elevated position than his, if we come to regard it in its true light. He is the constant associate of Nature, and may contemplate her beauty and grandeur in a thousand forms that are not open to the common observer. He has the best opportunity of studying many of the physical sciences while he is employed in attending to his daily labors in the field. The early history of the world teaches us, that the golden age was a period when agricultural employments formed the chief study of men, and when the cultivation of the soil was as much a delight and pleasure as it was a fixed and permanent business.”

“And yet this same business,” replied Harry, “is now considered by the generality of mankind as highly vulgar, if not positively disreputable.”

“And why have men been led to entertain notions on this subject,” said Mr. Courtland, “so grossly unjust and absurd? It certainly does not proceed so much from the business itself as from those who are engaged in it. The farmer is despised and neglected not on account of his employments, but on account of his ignorance. If he would but go to the expense and pains of cultivating his own mind (and there is scarcely a class of individuals in the community who could do this with the same success as himself), it would not be long before he would occupy a position in society that would be truly honorable and happy.”

“Your father is right, Harry,” said Mr. Russell, “and a thousand other reasons might be alleged why the farmer should maintain so elevated a place in the community, besides those which have reference merely to his own comfort and respectability. I will mention but one of these. He



holds a most important relation to the government under which he lives. He is called, with singular propriety and significance, although not without some flattery on the part of demagogues who would use him for their own selfish purposes, the bone and sinew of the country. He is certainly the very keystone in our own happy land which supports the arch of our political prosperity. How important, therefore, is it that the farmer should be moral, enlightened, and patriotic. It requires but little insight into the human mind to see that all our boasted rights and privileges, now and hereafter—our political wisdom, our political strength, our freedom from religious bigotry, in short, our dearest social and individual blessings—must depend mainly for their health and permanency on the measure of intelligence and uprightness that may be imparted to the free minds of the cultivators of the soil. They hold within their hands the destinies of this great country, and on their prudence and foresight must depend the happiness of millions of human beings yet unborn."

"Do you hear that, Percy?" observed Agnes Russell, with her habitual good-natured pleasantry. "Do you not comprehend that the standard of rural influence is rising in the market? Come! come! let us take courage from the prospect of soon teaching our city neighbors that we are not only able to manage the plow and the sickle, but that in case of necessity we would be equal to the task of swaying over them the scepter of authority too. At all events, none shall rule except at our own bidding."

The only reply made by Percy to these remarks was an incredulous shaking of the head. This was observed by his father, who then proceeded to address him as follows:

"From the remarks made by your brother Harry, my son, I infer that he is disposed to remain for the present with his parents on the farm, and the great probability is that he will dedicate his life to the study and pursuit of agricultural employments. But how will it be with you, Percy? What are your own views in relation to the choice of life?"

"I cannot say that they harmonize with those of my brother," said Percy, "nor have I been convinced, from the conversation that has just taken place, that it would



be best for me to entertain such views. But it is not so much that I differ from you because I have no confidence in the correctness of your theory, as that I am entirely dissatisfied with the slowness of its progress. If the sentiments and feelings of the farmer are to be raised to the standard you have mentioned (and I can see no good reason why, in the course of human progress, they should not be), I would like to see this great change accomplished at once. But as I very well know this cannot be expected, I would prefer exercising an influence on society in my own individual person, rather than wait the remote chance of being linked in this endeavor with others."

"I am not sure," replied Mr. Courtland, "that I understand your meaning. What influence do you expect to exert on the affairs of society anywhere that it is not in your power to exercise in your present situation?"

"It is impossible for me to say," answered Percy, "how much or how little influence I am able to exercise as an individual member of society. One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that I should like to exert an influence somewhere, and for some purpose, which it seems to me I am hardly doing under the circumstances by which I am now surrounded."

"In other words," said Mr. Courtland, "you feel as if you were not a personage of sufficient importance while acting in the sphere of life in which you have been hitherto compelled to move. Now, this is only betraying the ordinary feelings of discontent that more or less influence all of us. Are you sure that your expectations would be realized by changing your situation?"

"I am at least willing to make the experiment," answered Percy.

"The dangers necessarily attending the experiment you seem so anxious to make may be much greater than you are aware," said his father. "The season of youth is proverbially ardent and generous, while at the same time it is no less fanciful and romantic. The young adventurer is as anxious to distinguish himself, and is as sanguine of success, as were those ancient knights of whom we read in books of chivalry. He is willing to go forth and battle with a thousand forms of distress and terror—to overcome enchanters and giants—to submit to the extremest priva-



tions and sufferings—for the sake of his lady-love, without indulging for a moment in any other thought respecting the result of his labors than that of complete success and victory. The world is before him, and he is resolved on winning for himself its trophies and honors. But every one who witnesses his adventures knows full well that he is only engaged for the most part in the pursuit of shadows, and that in this eager pursuit he is not unfrequently wounded, disappointed, and disheartened. The only real pleasure that he can expect to enjoy is from the excitement itself. The objects to which this excitement is leading him too often melt from his grasp into airy nothing."

"I believe, father," said Percy, "that the picture you have drawn embodies the mistakes and follies of mankind in general. It is just as applicable to a country life as a city life. The only difference is, that the shadows in the one case are much more brilliant and attractive than in the other. If this world is really a world of shadows, let me engage in the pursuit of them where they will affect me most feelingly. I long to launch my little bark on the wide sea of life, if only for the sake of witnessing its uproar and commotion."

"It is well," answered his father, "although I must confess that I hardly anticipated a resolution so absolute and determined. But it is right, my son, that you should make your own choice of life, and I am sure that I shall never regret to find in the character of either of my children the qualities of firmness and decision." Then rising from his seat, and extending his hand toward Percy, he said, "God bless you, my dear boy! May He overshadow you by his wings of love and mercy in this life, and be your sure guide to a better life to come!"



## CHAPTER VI.

THE blessing pronounced by Henry Courtland on his son was as sincere as the declaration which gave rise to it was sudden and unexpected. He was perfectly willing that his children, in the choice of a calling, should be guided entirely by their own tastes and judgment, after listening to what he had to say on the subject, and yet when Percy's resolution was indicated in the manner we have seen, it is evident that his father gave but a reluctant assent to the unlooked-for determination. He tried to believe that it was all right, especially as the circumstances connected with this determination had been previously arranged by himself,—but he was half inclined to imagine that the decision itself was premature, perhaps unwise, and that it ought hardly to receive the sanction of his own better judgment. Our worthy farmer, however, was not a man who suffered his mind to be disturbed with doubts and regrets about that which could not easily be mended, and his countenance soon resumed its wonted cheerfulness. Little or nothing further was uttered by either of the parties on that occasion so long as they remained together. In a short time the persons composing the circle in the small parlor gradually separated. Agnes Russell was one of the last to withdraw. Although better prepared than her companions to encounter the views just expressed by Percy to his father, she was evidently much affected by what had transpired in her presence. She exerted every effort, therefore, to preserve her usual composure, and even gave some indications of her habitual pleasantry and good humor.

“My father has gone, Percy,” said she, “and he will expect me to accompany him home. I must therefore withdraw at once, and leave you with your mother. But before you set out in quest of adventures, I hope to be permitted to bid you a formal farewell. Your lady-love, to whom your father alluded, will certainly have to be taken care of, and if I only had the pleasure of her ac-



quaintance, I do assure you that while you were engaged in breaking a lance in her behalf, I would endeavor to prevent her from breaking her own heart in behalf of yourself. And now good-by, Percy. My father is waiting, but, as I have said, we will meet again soon, and then when you are just deserting your little native homestead for the great domain of the world, I will be at your side to inspire you with courage, although if I should happen to forget myself a little, I may at the same time be so unmannerly as to call you a fool for your pains."

Having uttered these words, this kind, good-natured creature glided out of the room with a rapid but silent movement, leaving an impression on Percy's mind as if some fairy form had been conjured up to strengthen and cheer him under his difficulties, and then had vanished away amid the somber light which in some measure seemed to cloud his own joyousness.

Percy and his mother were now left alone. The latter was a woman of great merit, although not of showy pretensions. She was mild, unassuming, and amiable in her manners, and her mind seemed to be almost entirely engrossed with the duties of her own household. But she was possessed of a sound understanding and a feeling heart. Indeed, her sensibility was so great that she permitted circumstances of a mere external nature, which to most others would have appeared but light and trifling, to cause her a great deal of internal disquietude. She had read a few books with benefit and advantage, but had acquired most of her knowledge by observation and experience in the world. Her great concern in life was for the welfare of her children. For the comfort and happiness of these when young she had labored day and night, and now when they were about to mingle with the world in earnest, her anxiety on their account was increased an hundredfold. Percy was her favorite child, and on the present occasion her mind was deeply affected by the circumstances concerning his future course which had just disclosed themselves.

As soon as Mr. Courtland, and the rest of the company which filled the little parlor, had withdrawn, she commenced speaking to Percy on the subject of his future movements.



"You tell us," said she, "that you are desirous of seeking your fortune in the great active world, but you do not say where, or how, or in what direction. Are you not too hasty, my child, in resolving to pursue a course which you do not see clearly marked out before you? Would it not be better for you to reconsider a resolution which, after all, perhaps, you have taken without sufficient deliberation and forethought?"

"My intention is fixed, mother," said he, "as firmly and as certainly as it could be bound to any purpose whatever. You mistake me entirely if you suppose the resolution to which you allude has been formed either suddenly or thoughtlessly. It has entwined itself with my mind, I do assure you, by a slow and painful process. I have thought of it by day and by night—while waking and while sleeping—in hours of labor and of rest. I may truly say it has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, for it was made the subject of my study and reflection from the earliest time I can remember."

"So, then," replied his mother after a short pause, "you are resolved on leaving the roof under which you have been sheltered—the hearth where you have been warmed and nursed—the family circle where you have shared so many comforts and enjoyments? And how soon, my dear child," she continued, "do you expect to put this resolution into effect?"

"Very shortly," was the quick reply of Percy. "In a few days—in a week—to-morrow, if it were possible."

"But why so hasty, my son?" said Mrs. Courtland. "Why seek to sunder the family tie, without having given us some previous notice of your intention?"

"Alas, mother!" answered Percy, "it is of but little moment to stand about ceremonies of this kind. All separations in this world must take place sooner or later, and when they do take place, they may all be considered as equally sudden. It matters little whether we part to-day, or to-morrow, or next day. When the time approaches for our doing so, the shock will be the same, whether the hour of separation arrives at one period or another."

"But whither are you going, my son?" said Mrs. Courtland, "and what object have you in view in seeking this cruel change? In what way do you expect to better your fortune?"



"It is sufficient for me to say," answered Percy, "that I am about to enter on the great journey of life. Hitherto I have seemed to tarry in the way rather than to have made any progress. But my spirit is impatient of the restraint under which I labor. I have no definite object in view, but I would push forward after something for which my heart seems to yearn with indescribable eagerness."

"God grant," his mother exclaimed, "that that something, whatever it may be, may be worthy of the wish which thus craves to be satisfied! I see you are determined on your course," she continued, "and can only, like your father, complete the part of a parent's duty which yet remains to be done, by bestowing on you my prayers and my blessing."

In the mean time the necessary preparations were carefully but hastily made for his journey, and when these arrangements were completed, he took an equally brief and hurried farewell of his friends. It was remarkable that he seemed quite indifferent about exchanging a parting adieu with his brother Harry. He indeed bade him a cold and formal farewell, but it was not that deep feeling—that affectionate grasp of the hand and the heart—which it might have been supposed he would have sought for on an occasion so tender and solemn. Not a tear was shed—not a faltering accent on the part of Percy betrayed the slightest evidence of fraternal emotion and attachment. "Good-by, Harry," were the only words he uttered on the occasion, and these were spoken with a half-averted countenance, as if he was really ashamed of his own conduct, or felt some strange sensations rankling in his bosom, which effectually subdued within him every feeling of fraternal love and affection.

So long as Percy's mother was engaged in completing the necessary arrangements for her son's departure, she seemed to exercise with firmness all the courage and fortitude the trying occasion required, but as soon as Percy had turned his back on the home of his childhood and youth, she sat down in the little parlor we have already mentioned, and wept like a child. "It is strange," she said to herself, "that he should appear so distant and so mysterious in his movements—that he should appear so cold toward those who love him so kindly and affectionately! God knows we have all treated him with the utmost degree of tenderness, and no one about the house ever thought that he was



otherwise than contented and happy. But something, which it is impossible to guess or understand, has given to my poor boy an altered and unusual deportment. Something is agitating his heart, on which, perhaps, depends much of his future happiness and misery !”

Just as Mrs. Courtland had concluded this silent kind of soliloquy, her further thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of Agnes Russell. It would have been evident to a mind less occupied with her own griefs than had been that of Mrs. Courtland, that Agnes too had been shedding tears of sorrow that morning. But the former took no notice of this, and extending her hand to the latter as she entered, she could only utter the brief sentence, “ Our poor Percy is gone !”

“ I know it well,” said Agnes, who now attempted to rally all her strength, in order that she might not too sensibly betray the feelings that were agitating her heart. “ I know he has gone, but I hope he has not gone far, and that it will not be long before he will return again, to cheer the hearts of his parents and friends.”

“ I only wish,” said Mrs. Courtland, “ that such hopes as these were comforting my own heart at present. But I cannot say with truth that they are. He seems, from some cause or other, to have behaved with so much mystery lately, that I am utterly at a loss to understand his conduct. Do tell me, Agnes, if I am not making an improper request, what were his expressions and deportment at the time he took his final leave of you and your father ?”

“ He never came to bid farewell to either of us,” answered Agnes.

“ Is it possible !” exclaimed Mrs. Courtland. “ Surely some unaccountable change has come over the temper of my child, or he could not have given occasion to all his friends to charge him with coldness and indifference !”

“ I must confess,” said Agnes, “ that both my father and myself were disappointed—perhaps I ought to say were hurt—by reason of the neglect with which we seemed to be treated by Percy. But we soon remembered that he might have reasons for his behavior quite satisfactory to himself, and that if we proceeded to condemn him without further knowledge of his motives, we might be doing him a gross injury and injustice. We were therefore willing to



believe that these mysterious circumstances will in due time explain themselves, and that however much we may regret their existence now, we shall some day or other perceive that Percy Courtland at least sanctioned them no further than as he believed them to be consistent with the most sacred requirements of honor and duty."

"You are right! you are right! Agnes!" exclaimed the distressed mother. "My dear Percy would never do anything that he knew to be at variance with the strictest principles of integrity and honor. We must wait the slow progress of time, in order to become fully assured that all is as it should be."

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## CHAPTER VII.

AT this juncture their further conversation was broken off by the sudden appearance at the door of a faithful assistant, named Rowland, whom Mr. Courtland had long retained on his farm, and who now peered about as if desirous of communicating to Mrs. Courtland something which was not designed to meet the ears of any other person. Agnes seemed to discover his intention at a glance, and immediately withdrew to some other part of the premises, as she was perfectly familiar with every creature and every locality about the farm.

Rowland was a man far advanced in life; and, although he was still capable of doing an ordinary day's work without breaking down under the task, it was evident from his appearance that he was not much less than sixty-five years of age. He was practically acquainted with every duty belonging to good husbandry, and was valued by Mr. Courtland principally on account of his steady assiduity, and the exact punctuality with which he performed his work. He had never been married, and - considering that he was an old bachelor, enjoyed a more than ordinary degree of cheerfulness and good humor. He was a little more talkative than men usually are at his age, and sometimes became troublesome in extending his conversation



beyond the reasonable limits his subject required. But the worst fault under which he labored was the assurance with which he appeared to utter all his remarks, whether founded in truth or error. Rowland, however, was too honest to persist for a moment in a known mistake. He had acquired some information by observing the manners and doings of people around him, and this, together with his complete knowledge of agriculture, sometimes made him a very agreeable, if not a very useful, companion. He was particularly serviceable as a teacher to the boys on the farm, and took great delight in instructing them in the more obvious principles of their calling, and even in some valuable lessons which were not entirely clear to the comprehension of their father. It was this person who now addressed Mrs. Courtland after Agnes Russell had withdrawn.

"I am not sure, Madam Courtland," said this old domestic, "that I ought to tell you everything, and yet somehow or other it happens that I can't keep anything from you. I am like a child, who is never better contented than when he has some little secret to trust to the bosom of his mother."

"It is all right, Rowland," said Mrs. Courtland courteously. "You never, I hope, found me violating the keeping of one of these secrets where either you or I thought it would not be right to do so."

"And that is just what I was going to say," replied Rowland. "And now I am come to tell you something that I saw this morning with my own eyes, and which I think you might as well have seen yourself, or which at least you have as good a right to know as I have."

"I believe you have been always kind and true to me, Rowland," answered Mrs. Courtland. "Let me hear at once then what it was that you saw with your own eyes, and the knowledge of which you seem to wish I should share with your own bosom."

"Ah me!" said the old man, with a very troubled countenance, "and may be after all I ought not to tell you. It concerns the affairs of one that we all used to love and respect highly, and if I thought it would do him any harm now, blow me (this was a favorite expression with Rowland) if I think I would utter one syllable about it."



Mrs. Courtland's excited mind was now roused to its utmost pitch of anxiety.

"Do tell me, Rowland!" she exclaimed, "and tell me at once, what it is that you wish me to know. Speak out, man, and do not be afraid."

"Well, then, it was only this, ma'am," said he, "and may be it don't amount to much after all. I was down in the field this morning, at the eastern end of the farm, and I saw from where I stood Percy in the woods, not more than fifteen minutes after he had left this happy home of his."

"You saw Percy in the woods?" rejoined Mrs. Courtland. "Well, if that is all you saw, I can't say that I would give you much for your secret. It was quite natural that he should be at the very spot where you saw him fifteen minutes after he left home. At least, I do not think he would have got much farther."

"Ah, but I saw something else besides," quickly replied Rowland—"I saw a gentleman drive up to him in a buggy, and Percy just handed to him his valise, and then seated himself by his side, and they drove off together."

"That makes your story a little more remarkable," said Mrs. Courtland. "And have you any idea who the gentleman was?" asked his interested questioner with eagerness.

"Well," said Rowland, "I am not sure that I ever saw the gentleman more than once before in my life. But having seen him once, you know, it was next to impossible for me to forget him."

"Pray, then," rejoined Mrs. Courtland, "tell me who he was. What did he look like?"

"Not to give you an impertinent answer," said Rowland, "I am persuaded he just looked like himself. But for your better information, I will say, that he resembled the gentleman who some time ago visited the house of Mr. Russell, and almost caused the distraction of poor Agnes by telling her of the death of her absent brother."

"What! not Capt. Lamberton?" inquired Mrs. Courtland.

"The very same gentleman they called Capt. Lamberton," said Rowland, "or I am telling you an untruth. But I had better relate the whole story. On the morning



of Percy's birthday, after he had been out very early taking a walk, I saw some person engaged in conversation with him just as he was about to enter the house. But as I was not able to see the gentleman very plainly from the spot where I was standing, it is out of my power to say whether he was the same person I saw this morning, or whether he might have been somebody else. I think, however, there can be no doubt but that he was a stranger in this neighborhood."

Mrs Courtland did not fail to question Rowland a little more closely on the subject of this stranger's appearance, but the above particulars were in substance all that she was able to draw out of him. From what he told her, she had no doubt that Capt. Lamberton was the person he had seen that morning. But whether he saw the same person on the morning of Percy's birthday appeared to her a little more uncertain.

In order to render our narrative perfectly intelligible, it may be necessary that we should be a little more particular in introducing our readers to the individual whom we have just mentioned by the name of Capt. Lamberton.

This gentleman, who might now be from forty to forty-five years of age, had at one period of his life been the commander of a small coasting vessel, which traded from and to the City of New York. Subsequently, however, he relinquished this employment, and at the crisis of the fever which prevailed so extensively on the subject of emigrating to the regions of California, he became largely concerned in the shipment of goods from New York to that country. It was by virtue of his being engaged in this department of commerce that Mr. Russell became acquainted with him. He was a single man, and had made two or three voyages to California, in the necessary transaction of his business, occasionally calling at the farm of Mr. Russell when a personal interview between them was thought to be desirable. It happened in the course of these visits that he formed a slight acquaintance with Agnes Russell, and was led to notice the intimacy that existed between that young lady and Percy Courtland. It was on one of these occasions too that he alarmed her with a sudden and distinct account of the death of her brother, the particulars of which he professed to have re-



ceived from an eye-witness to the catastrophe which had caused that melancholy event. Although Agnes treated Capt. Lamberton with her usual politeness, and even with some degree of kindness, yet it was known to herself, as well as to others, that she did not regard him as a favorite. Indeed, she was more than once induced to observe to her father, that she never felt perfectly easy in his presence. She was at all times willing to discharge toward him the rites of hospitality, but when these duties had been fulfilled, she felt no disposition whatever to show him any other favor, and was always glad when his business with her father terminated, and he was fairly engaged in retracing his steps to the City of New York.

As soon as Mrs. Courtland became disengaged from any further conversation with Rowland, her first thought was to communicate what she had heard to Agnes Russell, who was still loitering about the farm, and whom she found returning from a friendly visit to Maggy, in the kitchen. Agnes was as much surprised and puzzled at the disclosure made by Rowland as was Mrs. Courtland herself. Neither of them could give the least clew to the strange meeting between Percy and Capt. Lamberton as described by their informant, and they were at a still greater loss to penetrate the mystery that hung over the interview at the house.

"If ever this matter is made plain," said Agnes, "Percy will be the first to reveal its truth. There is a possibility that he himself may be deceived, but it is utterly impossible that he should feel disposed to deceive others."

Mrs. Courtland uttered the same opinion in still more positive and passionate language. "My poor boy," said she, "may be the object of some concealed villainy, which he may not be able to prevent, and we cannot understand—but I am confident he will never prove a villain himself." Mr. Courtland was called to the conference, and expressed the same faith in the integrity and uprightness of his son. The mysterious circumstances attending his departure he could no more comprehend than the rest. Nor was Mr. Russell less puzzled in forming a judgment of these strange transactions. "Let them take their course," he observed. "Our wisest plan will be to bear them with firmness, and to wait patiently for their further development."



## CHAPTER VIII.

ONE, two, three weeks—a month—had elapsed, from the period Percy Courtland had taken leave of his friends at Courtland Hall, and yet no tidings had been heard from him since. It was strange that nobody had seen him—it was stranger still that nobody had received a letter from him.

In the mean time the employments of the farm owned by Mr. Courtland were made to proceed in their usual order, and with their usual energy. Harry was more than commonly faithful and assiduous in attending to his duties. He had made up his mind to become a farmer, and he resolved, if possible, to feel for his calling all the respect and enthusiasm which he knew was cherished for it by his father. Rowland was no less heartily engaged in superintending the affairs which belonged more particularly to his own department. As to Mr. Courtland himself, he acted like a man who seemed determined, if possible, that the sorrows of life should not disqualify him for its duties. At times indeed his mind seemed somewhat oppressed and careworn. Even Rowland could not help noticing this, and would tell Harry that his father was like one of their own overtaken horses, who had become jaded and worried in the employments of life, and who required rest and refreshment in order to restore him to his former vigor and activity. But Rowland was unable to understand the strength and elasticity of that indomitable energy which seldom deserted Mr. Courtland, and which, if sometimes relaxed, was never in the slightest degree subdued. Often would he be seen pausing as if in deep reflection about something which gave him pain and uneasiness, but in a few seconds afterward he would manifest a determination of will, and would draw from his own mind a strength of consolation, which soon put everything to rights again. On one of these occasions he was seated on a projecting rock in the corner of a field, and seemed deeply absorbed in the intensity of his own feelings. His son Harry was



at work at a little distance from him. Suddenly rising from his seat, and crossing to the spot where Harry was engaged at his labor, he exclaimed :

"It won't do, Harry! it won't do! Too much thought will as certainly wear out the body as too much labor. Did you ever reflect, Harry, that it is very wrong to think too much?"

"Why, I really don't know," said Harry. "Perhaps I myself think entirely too little, and therefore it is not very likely that such an idea as that which you mention ever entered my brain."

"Well," said his father, "the truth of what I have just intimated to you is nevertheless just as certain as the sunlight which you now see before your eyes. And here is another advantage," he continued, "to be derived from the wholesome prosecution of rural labor. When our minds are hurried away by the impetuosity of our feelings, if all other things are as they should be—that is, if we have learned how to submit with resignation and trust to the dispensations of an overruling Providence—it will not be hard to correct this impetuosity by merely resorting to our habitual diversion of active labor. Our minds cannot, without injury, bear to be long on the stretch in relation to any particular subject. It is necessary that we should be amused by thoughts that are less rigid and unbending, and it is for want of this kind of relaxation that thousands of noble intellects have been ruined past all remedy. Professional men, merchants, scholars, and sometimes even the common mechanic, are in the habit of thinking until their very heart-strings crack, and therefore it is no wonder that they should in many instances lead wretched lives, and in the end be exposed to still more wretched deaths."

"Why, there may be too little thought, as well as too much," said Harry, "and the great secret after all, I suppose, is to know how to think right."

"Just so," answered Mr. Courtland. "I am glad, Harry, you are profiting by your daily observations of the world, as well as my own feeble teaching. You know that from your earliest years I have been trying to instruct you in the art of thinking correctly, and yet there is room to learn something more on this subject every day."



"But do you believe," said Harry, "that it is needful for the farmer to think with as much care and exactness as other men in the world?"

"With as much care and exactness!" ejaculated Mr. Courtland. "Ay, and with as much promptness and determination, too. Nay, he has need of even a greater degree of both foresight and decision. What, for instance, would have been the fate of this very field in which we have been working to-day had we not been both careful and prompt in preparing it for the seed which it is now receiving? Don't you remember that after the last rain, just four weeks ago, you thought we might postpone plowing it until another rain should fall? But my better reflection saw the danger that must necessarily attend such a resolution. I have been observing the course of the weather at this season for the last five or six years, and have found that a dry spell uniformly intervenes to hinder the operations of the farmer. By our anticipating the time of plowing a little this difficulty has been remedied, and we may now sow our seed with a reasonable prospect of getting a good crop."

"That is exactly what I always tell Harry," observed Rowland, who was standing sufficiently near to overhear the conversation that took place between Mr. Courtland and his son. "An ounce of prevention, I tell him, is worth a pound of cure."

"This maxim is certainly a correct one," replied Mr. Courtland, "but it is one which many persons find it difficult to carry into practice, and is especially hard to be followed by the young and inexperienced."

"If you had carefully closed the bars this morning," said Rowland, addressing his conversation to Harry, "Barney would not have escaped from the meadow, and you would not now have the trouble of going all round the country in search of him."

"And had not Tom Cavendish neglected closing the door of his foddering-gang last week," observed Mr. Courtland, "by which means his cattle were suffered to gorge themselves from an open feed-chest, he would not have been compelled to witness the death of two or three of the best cows he ever owned."

"Ay, and that loitering fool, Ben Saunter," remarked



Rowland, "lost nearly the whole of his grain during harvest, for want of timely caution in hauling it in from the field when it was ready, and securing it from the rain to which it was afterward exposed."

"Indeed," said Mr. Courtland, "there is no end to these mischiefs arising from sheer carelessness. Our farmers sometimes talk of being unfortunate, but I believe their disasters quite as often spring from their being inconsiderate and unwise. And yet most of them are sufficiently industrious too—but their industry, unhappily, is not always regulated by those systematic rules of order which ought to govern all farming operations."

"Do you hear that, Harry?" cried Rowland. "Blow me if your father is not right, and I know you will agree that he is, although you have not always followed his advice, nor, for that matter, mine either. But we must live and learn, boy, as the Indian said, who undertook to drink his broth without first cooling it."

"And who poured forth his wisdom, I suppose," said Harry, "from a scalded mouth, because like me it was necessary he should be punished a season or two before he could get rid of his ignorance. But I am glad to find, Rowland, that you are beginning to think I am not altogether an unmanageable scholar. If I have neglected my lessons when young, I hope that like some men in the world, much greater than I ever expect to be, I may only become the more wise and industrious as I grow older."

"Precisely so," answered Rowland. "Take us altogether, we are like a field of corn, which must be plowed, and nursed, and cultivated a good while before it comes to perfection, but which is all the better for having undergone pretty severe treatment in its first growth. I think, Harry, you will admit that I have not neglected to plow a good deal around and about you, when I thought it was necessary to do so?"

"Oh, yes!" returned Harry. "I will admit it all, and am willing to confess, too, you did your work so effectually that, sometimes, indeed, I thought you were cruelly tearing the very fibers which bound me to the soil, when you should only have loosened them a little, and then carefully covered them up again."

"Pshaw, now!" exclaimed Rowland. "You should not



talk so bluntly. Blow me, Harry, if it was not all intended for your good."

"And so," answered Harry, "I hope it is all going to turn out. You will not deny, I trust, Rowland, that I am now beginning to shoot up with some little degree of promise at least, and perhaps after awhile I may even bear a share of fruit which you may consider tolerable, if not even respectable."

"Nay, rather say," exclaimed Rowland, "which I shall consider as rich and abundant as was ever before produced by the joint labor of a fond father and a foolish old hireling like myself."

"Thank you! thank you, Rowland!" returned Harry. "I know that I am indebted to both of you, and most, indeed, to him whose care and counsel I am too apt to forget and undervalue. I am glad you are teaching me better manners, and reminding me of the strong claims my father has on my affection and duty."

Here the conversation ended. Mr. Courtland was not near enough to the parties to understand all that was passing between them. But it was evident to both that part of their discourse, at least, had not escaped him. This they inferred from the fact, that as soon as they had done speaking together, he approached a little nearer to where they were engaged at their work, and then exchanging glances with Rowland, he proceeded to say,—

"I was never better pleased with the preparation of a field in my life than I am with this. Here is the promise of a different kind of produce from that we have been sowing, not indeed to be expected from the field itself, but, what is of greater consequence, and having a much higher value, proceeding from the culture of the understanding and affections, and generously rewarding you and me, Rowland, for the labor we have bestowed upon it. Harry, I give you joy of your improvement in the art of agriculture. I trust that before long you may become an ornament to a profession which I shall expect to have you as zealously advocate, as I believe you have freely chosen and espoused for your own. But the horn is now summoning us to dinner, and I think we deserve a good one for the faithfulness and care with which we have performed our task this morning."



## CHAPTER IX.

Soon after this period Agnes Russell was seated in the porch of her father's house thinking over the incidents connected with Mr. Courtland's family which had transpired during the last four or five months of her existence, and which had made a very deep impression on her bosom. It was now the month of September, that month which seemed to resemble the state of her own mind—warm, tender, and animated—but at the same time giving some evidence of losing a portion at least of the full pride and joyousness of summer, and verging toward the changing and solemn realities of autumn. The sun shone on the trees and plants around her with a subdued although not entirely healthy warmth—the noisy concert of a thousand chirping insects made the hills and valleys vocal with music—the last flowers of the season were asserting their claims to be still worshiped and admired. All this was bright and lovely. But every now and then a wild breeze seemed to come from the woods which in a considerable degree chilled and deadened the warm and brilliant light that was collected from the last rays of the season. “These cold winds,” said she to herself, “may be regarded as the bitter blasts of adversity, which so often interfere with our highest hopes and sweetest pleasures. They cast a damp and a shadow over the prospects of life, and render us less satisfied with our present enjoyments. But, after all, why should we regret a change which, if not pleasing, seems to be necessary to our future happiness? Why regret that which is but the slow transition from summer to winter? The cold season has not yet come, and I am still permitted to enjoy the warmth and beauty of the one lingering around me. Let me seize the present moment while I continue to have the inclination and the power. And let me not forget that when winter does come, it is to be followed again by the bright and beautiful season of spring.”

At this period of her soliloquy, she was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Maggy, who was seen ascend-



ing the porch from the yard below, carrying in her hands an elegant bouquet of flowers, composed apparently of the choicest that could be selected. "I have brought you this bunch of flowers," said she to Agnes, when she had reached the spot where the sorrowful girl was sitting, "and I think it is just as pretty, and perhaps will be quite as acceptable as anything I could have gathered for you this morning at Courtland Hall. I guess you are well acquainted with the spot in our garden that sheltered and nourished them, and with the person who planted them there for your sake."

"Hist!" said Agnes. "The flowers are pretty indeed, and I feel equally thankful to you for them, Maggy, whether you selected them from the garden or the field. Billy Braxton was kind enough to bestow on me a similar favor some weeks ago, which he told me grew on the margin of the lake, and which I valued for their beauty quite as much, perhaps, as I could be brought to value these."

"Well, well!" replied Maggy, "I suppose so. And yet if their beauty was equal, I do not see but you might pay a little less respect to the margin of the lake than to the garden at Courtland Hall. May be the preference shown to the garden would after all only be natural. But, dear me!" she continued, stretching her eye in the direction of the beautiful sheet of water about which they had just been speaking, "I see two men approaching in a buggy, and as sure as I am a living creature, they have left the main road, and are making directly toward this very spot, Miss Agnes."

"They are strangers, I imagine," said Agnes, "and have some business with my father. But come, we will enter the house, and wait their arrival."

So saying, the two females retired from the porch where they had been standing, and entered the door of the dwelling together.

When the vehicle in which the strangers were seated stopped before the main entrance to the building, it was discovered that it was drawn by a very stout black horse, and seemed to be a conveyance of uncommon strength and durability, expressly adapted for hard and incessant travel. The two men leaped from their seats at the same time,



but one of them with much more ease evidently than the other.

Mr. Russell stood at the door ready to receive them, and as soon as they entered the inclosure was surprised to find that one of the two strangers was none other than an acquaintance we have already introduced to our readers, namely, Billy Braxton, whose name, as we have seen, had been mentioned a few minutes before by Agnes Russell to Maggy. The other person was a gentleman apparently upwards of fifty years of age, somewhat tall and thin in stature, with a sallow complexion, and betraying, by an occasional cough, unequivocal symptoms of a weakness, if not of an absolute disease, of the lungs. Although the weather had just changed from what is called the Indian Summer to the mild frosts of autumn, he seemed to be attired in clothing every way suited to the temperature of midwinter. He wore a long blue surtout coat, closely buttoned up to his chin, the collar of which was made to stand upright, and for greater warmth it was secured round his neck by means of a red silk handkerchief. He had on his head a traveling cap, and on his feet a pair of boots with stout thick soles, like those usually worn by laboring men in the coldest and dampest of weather. Every other part of his dress, so far as it could be discovered, seemed to correspond with his outward garments, and gave indubitable indications of perfect security against the severity of the season.

As to Billy Braxton, he was no less changed in his external appearance than the other was remarkable in the whole of his personal equipment. It was well known that Billy had been missing from the neighborhood ever since the departure of Percy Courtland from the dwelling of his father. The places at which he had been in the habit of appearing with as much regularity as a merchant on 'Change, seemed now in a great measure deserted, for it must be remembered that Billy had not only been a loafer himself, but was acknowledged to be a very prominent cause of loafing in other people. But what most attracted the attention of Mr. Russell, was the decided change which had taken place in his gait, as well as in some remarkable features of his outward costume. He no longer dragged his heels along as if they were fastened to a



lengthened chain behind him, but he moved with a briskness and alacrity that would have done credit to a much younger man. His rusty old coat, which had formerly faded from dark green into the yellow tinge of autumn, had been exchanged for a short jerkin that fitted close to his body, and which was drawn still tighter round him by a belt, not unlike those which are sometimes worn by our police officers. His pantaloons were so cut as to adhere with the same kind of strain to his limbs below, and his hat was made of those flexible materials that would accommodate themselves to any kind of slouch that might be most convenient. On the whole, Billy Braxton seemed to be, externally at least, an entirely altered and a much more active man.

As soon as he reached the door, followed by his companion, who remained a little in the rear, Mr. Russell burst forth with the exclamation, "Why, bless my stars, Billy! is that you? Come in, sir! come in! your neighbors have missed you for some time past, and thought that you were either lost in the lake, or had perished unexpectedly while sleeping in the woods, or had met with some other mishap that deprived you suddenly of the breath of life. By my faith, Billy! I am glad to see you."

Billy was certainly not altogether pleased with this homely greeting. Erecting himself into a position of assumed importance, he replied, "My name is William Braxton, and I do not exactly comprehend the allusions you are pleased to make to some imaginary incidents of my past life. But suffer me to introduce to you my particular friend, Mr. Walter Marshfield, of the City of New York. He is a gentleman of extensive connections, and an intimate associate of Captain Lamberton, from whom I believe he brings a letter which will make you still better acquainted with the bearer."

Mr. Russell bowed politely to the stranger, but not without feeling some considerable embarrassment caused by the changed demeanor and address of Billy Braxton. He, however, gave them both a hearty welcome into the house; but during the whole period of this preliminary ceremony he was sensible of a degree of confusion and awkwardness which, with all his endeavors, he found it almost impossible to overcome. He was for some time utterly confounded



by the novelty and strangeness of his situation. He would look first at one of his visitors, and then at the other, and try to comprehend the mysterious circumstances by which he was surrounded. Was the stranger, who had just been presented to him, a real gentleman, as his appearance seemed to indicate? and was the person who had so pompously introduced him—who was so brisk in his movements, so precise in his language, and so consequential in the expressions of his countenance—that veritable loafer who only a few months before every man, woman, and child in the neighborhood knew by the name of Billy Braxton? These were questions which he found it somewhat difficult to answer. He seemed for a short interval to doubt the evidence of his own senses. He thought it possible that he might only be dreaming, or that some strange vagary had taken possession of his brain sufficient to impair his reason and his judgment. But everything else around him appeared as real and as natural as ever. And there stood Billy Braxton, transformed indeed in appearance, but still exhibiting to his view every feature and mark of a countenance and person which, when once familiarly known, it seemed impossible ever afterward to forget. While he wondered therefore at the remarkable change which had taken place in the manners and conduct of this marvelous person, he was obliged to own at last that, whatever were his new pretensions, he could be none other than the same loitering creature who once made out, as he supposed, to gain by an assumed cunning what should only have been granted to his uprightness and integrity.

As soon as Mr. Marshfield was seated, he presented the letter to Mr. Russell which had already been alluded to by Billy Braxton. It was directed to Mr. Russell himself, and was found to read as follows:

“MR. THOMAS RUSSELL.

“DEAR SIR,—Permit me to introduce to your acquaintance Mr. Walter Marshfield, a gentleman with whom I have lived for some time on the most friendly terms. I take him to be a man of unquestionable character, in whom you may place implicit confidence. He is about to return to San Francisco, where, as he has informed me, he learned some particulars connected with the fortune of your son,



which you will be glad to receive from his own mouth. It would seem that your boy is still living, contrary to information derived from other sources some months ago. With my kindest regards to your daughter, believe me to be,

“Yours very truly,

“JOHN LAMBERTON.”

On the perusal of this brief epistle, Mr. Russell looked on the bearer of it with a degree of interest which made him forget all his previous sensations, occasioned by the mysterious transformation of his old acquaintance Billy Braxton. “Is it possible, Mr. Marshfield,” he exclaimed, as soon as he had finished reading the unexpected announcement made by Captain Lamberton, “is it possible, my dear sir? Do you really mean to say that my son is still living? What evidence are you able to furnish of this important fact? Where were you made acquainted with it? What reason can you give that you yourself have not been deceived? I am an old man, Mr. Marshfield, and do not myself wish to be imposed upon. But stop! I will call my daughter. Perhaps Agnes will be able to see the matter more clearly than I can. Agnes, my child! your presence is wanted for a moment. Here is a gentleman who is the bearer of important news. I wish you to judge of the truth of it.”

Marshfield was somewhat surprised to witness the effect which the perusal of Captain Lamberton's note had on the mind of Mr. Russell. It seemed difficult for the latter to control the violence of his feelings. He rose from his seat—looked earnestly into the face of the person who had brought him the news—advanced toward and turned again abruptly from Braxton—and then rushed to the adjoining room in search of his daughter. Agnes became alarmed at the hurried exclamations of her father, and returned with him to the parlor with a countenance agitated by expressions of fear and surprise. Every one present seemed now to feel the effect of this sudden excitement. In the confusion that prevailed Mr. Russell forgot to introduce his daughter to the messenger who had presented the note from Captain Lamberton. Both parties bowed and faltered in each other's presence, and even Billy Braxton gazed at the scene that was passing before his eyes in stupid



wonder. At last, Agnes showed the superiority of her own self-possession by calmly inquiring what had given rise to so much agitation on the part of her father.

By this time Mr. Russell himself appeared to have recovered his recollection sufficiently to be able to explain, though in a very hurried manner, the cause of his disturbance. Turning to Agnes, he said, "Let me introduce you to Mr. Marshfield, who is a friend of Captain Lamberton. He has brought a letter from the captain which I think you will not peruse without feeling an equally deep interest with myself in its contents. Here it is. Sit down, my daughter, and read it at your leisure."

Agnes took the letter from her father, and seating herself at one of the windows, began to peruse it. It was evident, from the changes depicted in her countenance, that she did not perform this task without undergoing, as her father had observed, a similar state of feeling with that of his own. But she resolved to control, if possible, what she had no power to prevent. Folding her hands across her breast, and gazing with a steadfast look at the countenance of Mr. Marshfield, as if she wished to pierce to the very bottom of his thoughts, she calmly remarked, "It would be cruel to tantalize us with hopes, if there was nothing real on which these hopes could be founded."

"Yes!" exclaimed her father—"no greater injury could be done to our feelings."

"But let us be calm," she replied, turning to her father, "and Mr. Marshfield, I trust, will tell us all about it. Will you have the goodness," she continued, "to state your reasons for believing my brother is still living?"

"That I can do in a very few words," replied Mr. Marshfield. "I left San Francisco only a few weeks ago, and before that time I was made acquainted with a young gentleman who called himself Alfred Russell."

"Did he resemble Agnes? Did he resemble my daughter here?" interrupted Mr. Russell eagerly.

"Alas, my friend," replied the stranger, "I had but little opportunity of scrutinizing the features of his countenance, for at the time I saw him he was very ill, and lying on a sick-bed."

At this announcement Agnes looked deeply distressed, and her father was about to address his visitor again.



But Agnes interfered by saying, "Stop, father! let the gentleman make his statement in his own way. It will be time enough to question him afterward."

Mr. Marshfield then went on to say, that he was accidentally called on to visit a young man at one of the public houses in the City of San Francisco, who called himself Alfred Russell, and who mentioned at the same time that he had relations living in the State of New York. It was owing to this latter circumstance that Mr. Marshfield had been requested by a friend of his to call and see him, in order, if possible, to discover the relatives of the young man on his return home, and apprise them of his sickness. He understood from Mr. Russell that he had but a short time before returned from sailing on a voyage to China, in which country he had been absent from California for a number of months."

"Did he inform you of having met with any accident on that voyage?" inquired Agnes.

"He did not do so himself," said Mr. Marshfield, "but I was told by others that he fell from one of the masts immediately after sailing out of the Bay of San Francisco, and it was supposed by those who saw it from the shore that he was drowned."

"It is our own Alfred, dearest Agnes!" exclaimed Mr. Russell with great emotion. "It is my own poor boy, who is now lying sick, or perhaps is dead and buried, among strangers."

Agnes Russell had much difficulty in restraining her own feelings, but she replied with great calmness,—“Russell is by no means an uncommon name, and although Alfred is, yet it might easily have happened in talking over the circumstances connected with my brother’s voyage that the former of these names would have been mentioned without the other.” Then turning to Mr. Marshfield, she said,—

"You stated just now that the visit you made to the young man whom you found lying sick at San Francisco was mainly intended to lead to a discovery of his friends residing in the State of New York. Certainly, then, he must have furnished you with some description of his relatives and family calculated to lead to a successful prosecution of your inquiries."



"He was about doing so," answered Mr. Marshfield, "but I am sorry to say that in making the effort his strength failed him, and I was prevented from seeing him afterward previous to my embarking in the vessel which brought me back to New York."

"And did anybody know him," said Agnes, "to be the same Alfred Russell who some months before had fallen from the vessel which sailed from San Francisco to China?"

"He was supposed to be the same person," replied Mr. Marshfield, "and indeed I thought at the time there could be no doubt about it; and yet I am unable to say that a single individual spoke of the matter as an absolute certainty."

Agnes cast her eyes on the ground as if lost in deep reflection, and as if still seeking for some more certain clew to satisfy the doubts which continued to disturb her mind. Then raising her head, as if again prepared to address the stranger, her attention was suddenly arrested by a small braided chain suspended from his neck, and resting carelessly on his bosom, on which she continued to gaze intently for several moments. At last she faltered out, as if scarcely knowing how to arrive at her purpose, "That chain, sir! may I look but for an instant at the slight chain that is hanging from your neck?"

"True! very true!" ejaculated Mr. Marshfield, as he promptly disengaged the chain from his person, and was in the act of handing it over to Miss Russell, "that chain was given to me by the young man, with the remark that I should keep it, and that he would tell me more about it afterward. But the increase of his bodily weakness prevented him from saying anything more at that time. I kept the chain in my possession, and as I did not see the owner subsequently, I of course had no opportunity of restoring it to him."

The moment Miss Russell took the braided ornament in her hand, it required no further evidence to convince her that her brother was still living, or at least that he had been living at the time Mr. Marshfield saw him lying at the hotel in San Francisco.

"It is enough!" she exclaimed—"this trinket is the best evidence I could have of my brother's identity. It was



woven by my own hands, and presented to him on the day of his departure from home. I would know it among a thousand others that might be made to resemble it. But what is to be done now? My brother is poor—is sick—is among strangers—and is in a country where the common courtesies of life must fail for want of female sympathy and attention. The privations to which he must necessarily be exposed will of themselves kill him, even if he should have physical strength enough to triumph over his malady.”

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## CHAPTER X.

THE reader will have noticed that during the whole of this interview between Agnes Russell and Mr. Marshfield Billy Braxton did not for a single moment undertake to meddle with anything that was going on. He remained in the background, and although Agnes had known him for many years as familiarly as she knew the nearest of her neighbors, yet, owing to the awkward manner in which she had made her entrance into the apartment where they were now assembled, and the remarkable transformation that had taken place in the dress and appearance of her friend Billy, not the slightest recognition had as yet taken place between them. But as soon as Agnes had uttered the words we have recorded above he rose from his seat, advanced two or three steps across the floor, and, bowing politely to her rather as a new acquaintance than as an old neighbor, he proceeded to address her in the following language:

“I believe Miss Russell scarcely remembers her former acquaintance, William Braxton, although but a few months have passed over our heads since we knew each other just as well as two calves that have been reared in the same field.”

The remark of Billy was unfortunate, at least unfortunate for his own equanimity of feeling—for it was out of the power of grief itself to lull that sarcastic humor which was a prominent feature in the character of Miss Russell.



On the present occasion it was something like the ruling passion, strong in the very fear of death. Looking him gravely in the face, and making a slight obeisance in return for his own profound civility, with a lurking mischief seated in the corner of her eyes, she promptly replied,—

“If you, sir, are really the Billy Braxton I once knew, you will readily guess the reason why I have been slow in recognizing my former acquaintance, for, according to your own showing, you have certainly grown to be a greater calf than I ever remember you to have been before.”

Billy blushed to the very eyes, but like a skillful tactician, or rather like a cunning diplomatist, he very well knew that it was altogether necessary he should appear to regard his own blunders with stoical indifference. Marshfield looked as if he would have been pleased with the joke, only that it fell on one who was traveling with him as his associate and companion, and in whose disgrace he was necessarily somewhat involved. This, too, made it more difficult for Billy to preserve his assumed temper and dignity, which after all might have been seriously damaged in the conflict, had not Mr. Russell, at this critical moment, come to his relief, by acknowledging before his daughter his own carelessness and oversight.

“I forgot, my dear,” said he, “to call your attention to the presence of our former friend and neighbor, Mr. Braxton. He is traveling in company with Mr. Marshfield, and seems to be wonderfully changed since we last had the pleasure of seeing him.”

When this declaration was made to Agnes Russell by her father, much as she delighted to rebuke the presumption of impudence, she could not help feeling some degree of uneasiness from what had just taken place. She saw nothing in the conduct and appearance of Mr. Marshfield but what accorded with the character of a gentleman. Braxton himself had become so changed in her own eyes, as well as in the eyes of her father, as to appear a decidedly different being from what they knew him to be only a few months before. The conversation with Mr. Marshfield on the subject of her brother's illness in its very nature had been grave and serious, and she almost regretted that she should have suffered this conversation



to be interrupted by what might seem to be an unseasonable levity on her part. The truth is that her heart, during all that had just passed, however she continued to conceal it from others, was full of tenderness and grief for her brother, and she listened with more gravity and attention to the remarks of Billy Braxton, when he renewed the conversation in the following terms :

“I have been so long acquainted with your pleasantry and good nature, Miss Agnes, that I shall not seek to find fault with them on the present occasion. But you will agree with me, I believe, that we now have matters of a more serious and weighty nature to attend to. You have read the note addressed to your father by Captain Lambertson, and you have listened to the statement made by Mr. Marshfield. From these sources, you may gather at least that your brother is poor, is sick, and is perhaps languishing among strangers in a strange land, without one nursing friend or sympathizing heart to comfort him under his sorrows. I knew your brother once, and loved him dearly—not indeed as you have loved him, but with sufficient warmth and tenderness to second your own wish, that his wants ought to be attended to.”

When Billy Braxton had pronounced these words, Agnes Russell could not but feel perfectly astonished. She looked at him again to assure herself that he was the same person who had been so recently regarded as little more than a genteel vagabond by the whole neighborhood. She could hardly persuade herself that a man who was once so trifling in his manners, so light in his conversation, and so useless to his fellow-mortals around him, should all at once assume to her the character of a gentleman, a counselor, and a friend. But she was mortified at the same time to think that he should believe it to be possible that she could in the slightest degree have forgotten the love and attachment she owed to her only brother. All this passed through her mind with the rapidity of lightning, and as soon as Braxton had done speaking, she replied with the greatest degree of warmth :

“Yes! my brother ought to be looked to. But how is this task to be performed? and who among us all is able to undertake it? I myself am a poor weak girl, helpless, almost friendless, and without the means necessary for such



an undertaking. I am the only remaining member here of an afflicted family—the only frail prop of an aged parent—and how, then, is relief to be sent with means so inadequate, and to a country so distant and so expensive?”

“It is to consider these difficulties, and to surmount them if possible,” said Braxton, “that Mr. Marshfield and myself have been induced to wait on you on the present occasion. For this, too, we have the sanction of Captain Lamberton, who professes to feel a deep interest in the happiness and future welfare of your brother.”

Agnes felt a little embarrassed at this declaration, and then answered, “I can scarcely imagine why Captain Lamberton should feel much interest in any event connected with the welfare of either my brother or our family. I think while here he was acquainted with Alfred but slightly, but perhaps may have cultivated a more intimate acquaintance with him afterward in California. However this may be, I am bound to feel under obligations to him for any interest manifested by him in our behalf. But how can his influence, or the influence of anybody else, be exercised for our relief? The great want of my brother at present, in all probability, is, the timely interference of female tenderness to nurse and take care of him. But it may be already too late to render him this service, and even if that should not be the case, where could this service be procured? Who will undertake the hazardous experiment of sailing to California, and of meeting a thousand dangers for his relief?”

“Surely,” replied Braxton, “none could be induced to do that but yourself!”

“Alas!” cried Agnes, “why distress me with a project so hopeless and impracticable? However much I may love my brother (and I think I love him with all the sisterly affection that could warm and animate the heart of any woman), yet I lack the courage, the energy, the heroism, necessary to undertake a task of so much difficulty!”

“Such may be your own impressions,” said Braxton, “but those who know you best feel themselves fully warranted in entertaining a different opinion. To overcome obstacles that appear insurmountable is characteristic of female strength and resolution. Of these virtues you pos-



sess a sufficient share to enter without fear or hesitation on the enterprise. My attachment to your brother induces me to urge you to the undertaking, and I have brought to your assistance a gentleman of high honor and respectability, who expects to sail again in a few days for the city where he formerly left your brother, and who will become your companion and guide on your voyage to California, if you but condescend to place yourself under his protection."

This appeal, made under the circumstances we have narrated by a man who only a few weeks or a few months before had been regarded as a mere cipher and blank in society, but who now spoke with a force and earnestness which had a powerful effect on the mind of Agnes, was as novel as it was sudden and unexpected. She could not but feel the full effect of the strange situation in which she found herself so wonderfully placed. For a moment she was absolutely bewildered, and yet somehow or other she felt disposed to put implicit confidence in the sincerity of the speaker, and to regard every word as true that he had uttered in her presence. Without speaking a syllable, she first looked at Mr. Marshfield, then at her father, then at Braxton, and then at Mr. Marshfield again. This latter gentleman seemed to realize in his own mind the perplexity under which she labored; and, in order to confirm what had just been said to her by Braxton, and to make her sensible of his own views on a subject which interested her so much, he proceeded to address her as follows:

"I cannot but concur, Miss Russell, in the observations made to you by Mr. Braxton. I have reason to believe, from information received through Captain Lamberton and others, that you possess the necessary qualifications for the task which they would seem to have assigned you. So far as regards myself, I can only say that my knowledge of the people and manners of the country where your brother is at present lying sick, gives me but little hope to expect that he will receive much nursing or attention, unless it can be rendered to him by his own friends and relations. Owing to the great want of female society in San Francisco, it must necessarily happen that much suffering is endured in cases of sickness on account of the absence of female tenderness and assiduity. I myself am



an old bachelor, and indeed an invalid, but I flatter myself that I am a gentleman, and that I am still possessed of sufficient physical strength to take care of any young lady who may see proper to place herself, for an object like that you have in view, under my protection."

At the conclusion of this address Agnes cast another look at her father, a look of solicitation and anxiety, yet blended with a smile of benevolence that streamed like a rainbow of promise through her tears. The father was not slow in comprehending the appeal which she seemed to be making to his own judgment and approval.

"I can hardly tell, my child," he proceeded to say after a moment's pause, "with what sensations I ought to view a subject that has been started before us so suddenly, and the consideration of which would seem so deeply to concern your own happiness and safety. God knows that I entertain a warm and parental affection for your brother, but it seems hard—I was almost going to say cruel—that I should be compelled to seek for the preservation of one of my children at the imminent danger of sacrificing the other. Like it sometimes happens to a gallant friend, who attempts to rescue his companion from a watery grave by plunging into the stream himself, both may be lost in the hazardous struggle that is to ensue. The possibility of such a catastrophe I can hardly bear for a moment to contemplate. It would be the final consummation of that sorrowful bereavement which has so long pursued our unhappy family. It would be the signal for hewing down my own shattered and decayed trunk, after the branches have been driven by the tempest to the four winds of heaven."

"And yet, my father!" exclaimed the heroic girl, "if the mission should be a successful one—if the struggle should end in triumph and deliverance—what a noble cause for congratulation would remain to us all, and how calmly might we sink at last when it should be the will of Heaven to absorb us into the ocean of eternity!"

"True! true!" ejaculated her father. "You are right, my daughter! Your piety and courage are greater than my own. There is a mightier arm than ours, in which we should never cease to trust. I all at once feel as if I saw this arm outstretched for our deliverance. At least



something seems to inspire me with a confidence and hope I was insensible of before. The Great Ruler of the universe will not forsake the humblest of his creatures who put their trust in him, and you shall be his good angel to perform his benevolent purpose on the present occasion "

It is unnecessary that we should follow up the further discussion which took place in regard to this important subject. We have only room to mention here, that it was finally arranged Agnes should place herself under the protection of Mr. Marshfield, and make a speedy embarkation in the same vessel with him for California. But this arrangement was not made without some feelings of a peculiar nature experienced at the same time both by Agnes and her father. They had no knowledge of the stranger who was to act as her conductor and friend, other than that they derived from the one single interview which took place on the occasion we have just related, and in which Billy Braxton acted such a conspicuous as well as mysterious part. This latter individual had become a perfect riddle to them. In all his professions he seemed to perform his part with the utmost dignity, openness, and sincerity: but it was the display of these very qualities, so foreign to everything they had ever before witnessed in his conduct—so contrary to everything they had reason to expect—that made his case the more inexplicable and perplexing. Nor were they much better informed in respect to the relation in which he stood toward Mr. Marshfield and Captain Lamberton. They inferred he was, somehow or other, in the service of the latter gentleman, but in what way employed, and for what purpose, they had no means of judging. They learned likewise that some business transactions were being carried on between the captain and Mr. Marshfield, but the exact nature and extent of these transactions it was impossible for them to ascertain. Notwithstanding all this, however, they were strongly led to commit their hopes and inquiries in relation to Alfred Russell entirely to this stranger, and it was at last concluded that Agnes should meet him in the City of New York in a few days afterward, and should sail with him thence to that far distant land of gold, whose shores are washed by the Pacific Ocean.



## CHAPTER XI.

DURING the period that was yet to elapse until Agnes should take leave of her friends, she was diligently employed in making such arrangements as she thought the occasion required. It was now the season of autumn, and her great hope was that she might be able to reach home again by the following spring. Her principal concern was of course on account of her father, whom she tried to persuade to become an inmate in the Courtland family until her return, but who preferred, with a single domestic, to occupy his own dwelling. "Here," said he to his daughter, "I shall have more time for reading, more opportunities for labor, and more hours for meditation. When I am tired of one employment I can resort to another, and I will thus be able to regulate my pursuits so as to be neither too idle nor too busy. I am anxious during your absence to avoid both these extremes. Should anything happen, so as to require the interference of my neighbors, they are not far off, and could soon be called to my assistance." Although Agnes could hardly be persuaded of the correctness of these views, yet she cheerfully agreed that it would be proper for him to consult his happiness in his own way.

Another arrangement, which indeed did not originate with herself, but which she slowly fell in with when suggested to her by her friends, arose from what was said to be the want of some female attendant, who would be willing to become her companion during the time she should be employed in accomplishing the object of her perilous mission. The idea of seeking for such a companion was suggested to her by Mrs. Courtland. Agnes was insisting on her own courage and fortitude as being sufficient to serve her under circumstances of the most trying difficulty. No other persons were present but themselves and Maggy, who has already been more than once introduced to our readers, and who on this occasion appeared to be busily employed in attending to her domestic duties. "You shall



not go alone," said Mrs. Courtland. "You must look out for some one who will agree to serve you as an assistant and companion, and who will stand by you in case of danger. You might be insulted and murdered without a witness."

"Pshaw!" replied Agnes, "I can see no good reason for such a companion. I have long depended on my own wits for defense and protection, have spent many hours, both abroad and at home, without any other support than my own courage and self-possession, and under the most alarming circumstances have always found these sufficient for my purpose. Have I not scoured the lake alone in a boat when there were signs of an approaching tempest, and shot a wild cat with the first weapon I could pick up in the house, when there was no person perhaps but myself within sound of the report of my rifle?"

"Nay, but," said Mrs. Courtland, "scouring lakes and shooting wild cats, in the peopled regions of America, may be much easier, and much safer too, than defeating the snares and braving the insults of unprincipled men in the wilds of California. I tell you, my child, it is just as necessary for you to be accompanied by a female companion for your better comfort and security, as it is for you to have clothing and food for your ordinary warmth and existence."

"Well, supposing it to be so," answered Agnes, "how is this want to be supplied? I never could think of persuading, either by flattery or temptation, any creature of my own sex to accompany me, and it would be difficult, I imagine, to find a person who would at once be willing to brave the perils and hardships which would be inseparable from such an undertaking. Ordinary servant-girls could hardly be expected to possess minds either romantic or noble enough to fit them for such a purpose."

"I see the difficulty as you do, my dear Agnes," cried Mrs. Courtland, "and I have seen it all along. But you must not and cannot go alone."

"Either I must do that," exclaimed Agnes, "or stay at home. There is no female in this neighborhood, or perhaps in any other neighborhood around us, who could be expected to peril her life, her health, and her peace of mind, for my sake."



At that moment Maggy, who had all along remained in a stooping position employed on some menial service in one corner of the room, straightened herself up to an erect posture, and, resting her hand deliberately on the back of a chair that stood next to her, observed, "I am sure, Miss Agnes, that I love you, although it may be that you do not think so."

"Why, my poor, kind girl," answered Agnes, "I am sure too that I never doubted your love for me, and for all who have belonged to our family. But why is it that you are pleased to make such a remark at present?"

"Because I feel as if I could fill the station," said Maggy, "which you seem to think it would be so difficult to have filled by persons like myself. Have you not often told me that poor uneducated girls have understandings and feelings like other people, and that all we wanted was to think a little in order to see things just as you see them? Well, now, Miss Agnes, I have been running this matter over in my own mind ever since Mrs. Courtland commenced talking to you about it in this room, and I agree with her that it would be a crying shame to let you go away alone, without a single being to befriend you in case of insult or accident. I don't know that there is much in me, Miss Agnes, that is either noble or romantic, but I believe I understand the difference betwixt right and wrong, and that I could stand up in my own defense, and in the defense of others too, if any wicked person should attempt to offer us an injury. Only get the consent of Mrs. Courtland, and I am sure that I would as cheerfully and as freely follow you to the end of the world, as I would my own mother if she was here on this spot asking me to do so."

"Excellent! By all that we could hope, most excellent!" exclaimed Agnes, running toward Maggy, and imprinting a hearty kiss on her forehead. "That kiss seals you as my faithful and trusty companion, worthy to follow a far more gracious and noble lady. Why, Maggy, if I were the most princely adventurer in all Christendom, I should want no braver or more devoted follower than yourself."

"As to that," answered Maggy, "I am not sure that I know much about devotion or bravery, but I think I know how to scorn a fool and to manage a rogue. But all this



time you forget that my will is not exactly my own, and that Mrs. Courtland has something to say about an arrangement that may deprive her of my services for a twelve months to come."

"Oh, that may be readily remedied," cried Agnes. "It will be very easy, I am sure, to procure for her a substitute,—far easier than it would be to fill your place for me, should you now see fit to withdraw the offer of your services."

"Agnes has just remarked," answered Mrs. Courtland, "what I was going to say myself. Your own will is all that is necessary to complete the arrangement. Not only do I give my hearty consent to the measure, but you shall have my praise and thanks into the bargain."

This declaration on the part of Mrs. Courtland was sufficient to effect the purpose which Maggy had so much at heart, but which she thought proper to refer to her whose approbation she considered it her duty first to obtain. In a few days every necessary preparation for the departure of Agnes was fully completed. Harry Courtland undertook to convey her and her companion to the City of New York and to see her fairly embarked for that country which had become an object of so much interest to thousands of people in all parts of the world.

It may easily be conceived that Agnes took leave of her friends with a heart full of tenderness and feeling, but at the same time we are bound to say with a heroism and fortitude that only raised her the more highly in their esteem, and which were peculiarly her own. Her greatest trial of course was in parting with her father. She faltered—she hesitated—she summoned to her aid, again and again, that resolution which had never before deserted her under the most painful circumstances,—but she still found her strength insufficient for the sorrowful occasion. At last she sought consolation in that sure refuge which she knew would in like manner be her father's greatest support. She told him she was convinced of the presence of an unseen hand, whose guidance she hoped would crown her efforts with success. Both cheerfully left the result to that agency which they were persuaded, however it might appear to short-sighted mortals, was always exercised for good and not for evil.



From her friends in general, as we have said, she found it less difficult to part. So far from appearing cheerless and discouraged, she manifested a degree of pleasantry in her discourse that harmonized admirably with her temper and disposition. "I am going," said she, "to a land of dreams and fancies—to a community of people who expect to dig their fortunes out of the bowels of the earth. Should I unhappily fail in the object I have in view, and be regarded by these people as a weak and visionary girl, I will at least have the advantage of turning the tables on them by pointing to their own folly. I will revenge myself by preaching a crusade to them against gold digging."

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## CHAPTER XII.

No incident of extraordinary magnitude transpired during their journey to the City of New York. They pursued their journey quietly and pleasantly on the first day, until at the hour of noon they sought for rest and refreshment at a public inn on the roadside.

At the moment our travelers had stopped for this purpose, and Harry was in the act of handing Agnes and her companion out of the carriage, a horseman, carefully muffled up in a comfortable overcoat, which seemed almost too heavy for the state of the weather, but which nevertheless was buttoned closely up to his very chin, passed at a little distance on the other side. Neither Harry nor Agnes seemed to notice the stranger as he trotted along on his journey, and so far as regards themselves they would have suffered him to pass without making a single remark. But having been shown by the landlord into a lower apartment of the inn, Maggy ran to a window at the other end of the room, which looked out on the road in the direction the traveler was taking, and eyeing him intently as he rode hastily forward, she declared that she knew him, to use her own language, just as well as she knew her own face in the looking-glass. "That," said she



emphatically, "is Billy Braxton, or no such person as Billy Braxton ever lived in the neighborhood of Courtland Hall."

Agnes looked after the stranger, and so did Harry, but as by this time the distance had become so great as to afford them a very imperfect view of his person, they were unable to speak with any reasonable certainty of its identity. Agnes thought if there was a resemblance it was more in his manner of riding than in anything else. Harry declared that he could perceive no resemblance whatever, and that he believed the likeness was altogether wanting except in Maggy's own imagination. As the odds were against Maggy, and the question raised seemed to rest on evidence that was fanciful and uncertain, the discussion of the subject was soon dropped, and in a short time the supposed appearance of Billy Braxton seemed to be entirely forgotten.

After dinner our travelers resumed their journey, — stopped at an inn in the evening, and bespoke lodgings for the night. They all slept soundly, and the next morning were ready to start again on their journey.

Before leaving the inn, Harry commenced interrogating the landlord on the subject of the public houses along the road, requesting to be pointed to one that would afford them the best accommodations for dining at noon.

"As to that," said the landlord, "I am not so sure that I am able to answer your questions. But stop, here comes a gentleman who will put you all right. Ask him, since he is as well acquainted with the road, and the people who live on it, as I am with the furniture of my own bar-room."

Harry looked behind him, and was surprised to see approaching at the same hurried gait we have already mentioned, the identical person whom Maggy had the day before pronounced to be Billy Braxton. They all watched his approach with intense curiosity, a circumstance that did not seem to escape the observation of the traveler. There was a large open space in front of the tavern-house, which extended some distance across the main road. As soon as he had advanced to a line parallel with this opening, his horse was noticed to make a circuit in a direction opposite to the spot from which his motions were watched by Harry and his companions, until he had advanced suffi-



ciently far to elude their scrutiny, and again felt at liberty to resume his position on the public highway.

"I think we shall not learn much from that gentleman," said Harry, as soon as he was made sensible of the stranger's eagerness to pass without recognition or disturbance. "But pray, Mr. Landlord," he continued, "do tell me what kind of a person he may be who has just vanished from our sight with such a strange show of mystery about him. Who is he, and what is his business in this neighborhood?"

"Indeed, that's beyond my ability to tell," replied the landlord. "Nevertheless, I must own that I always found him to be more civil than his behavior would seem to indicate this morning. It is only of late that he has commenced visiting these parts, and whenever he makes his appearance, although he is always gentlemanly and polite in his manners, he is sure to act like a man whose business requires him to move with the speed of a race-horse."

Harry addressed no further questions to his obsequious but wary landlord. Trusting to his own sagacity, therefore, for the discovery of a convenient inn on the road, and bidding his landlord a kind good-morning, they all got into the carriage which was waiting at the door, and he drove off without further remark or conversation.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

As soon as our travelers had parted from their obliging host, the question was again raised in regard to the appearance and conduct of the strange-looking horseman. "I tell you," said Maggy, "it is my old friend Billy Braxton, as sure as he carried a head on his shoulders. Did you not mind his long spindle-shaped arms, his great broad back, and the crook at the end of his nose? This last he attempted to hide by turning his head, and indeed his whole body, when he tried to escape from us at the tavern-house: but I got a full peep at it in spite of all his



manœuvres. I am sure I could tell Billy Braxton's nose from a thousand."

"I do not think," replied Agnes, "that we ought to be so sure of Billy Braxton's nose, Maggy, since we are not sure of Billy Braxton himself. I once too thought that I could most certainly have told his person among a thousand, and even among tens of thousands, but either Billy has been playing a trick on me, or my eyes have refused their offices of longer acting as a guide to my understanding. In short, Maggy, I am just as much at a loss to know whether this strange personage be really our old friend Billy Braxton, as I am to conjecture what could be his motives for such a transformation, supposing it to be possible that he is the veritable creature you take him to be."

"And I am brought to encounter the same difficulties with yourself," rejoined Harry. "If he was in reality our old friend Billy, we shall in all probability be put in possession of some additional intelligence concerning him at no distant time. If, on the contrary, he be but an indifferent individual, and went through the part we saw him perform either from caprice, or from a cautiousness with which we have no direct concern, then his assumed appearance can be of little consequence to us either one way or the other."

We will pass over in silence what befell our travelers during the remainder of this, and the three or four succeeding days, which had necessarily to elapse before they approached the end of their journey.

They had now approached within thirty miles of the great commercial city toward which they were directing their travels. It was the last day of their long journey, and while waiting for breakfast, and gazing out of a window that opened on the public road before them, the same mysterious horseman again rode past with his accustomed velocity, and apparently with renewed efforts to conceal his countenance and person from those who were watching his movements. Agnes was the first this time to announce his sudden approach to her companions. "Look, Harry! Maggy!" she abruptly broke forth with distinct emphasis, but evidently with some degree of trepidation, "yonder comes our flying horseman again. Now mark



him well !” But almost before her words had time to fall from her lips the horseman had pushed forward with lightning speed, and was already lost to their wondering eyes in the distance.

“He seems to ride like Lucifer himself,” exclaimed Harry. “He must doubtless be either a madman or a demon !”

“I tell you again,” replied Maggy with great simplicity, “be he madman or be he the Evil One himself, he is none other than our old acquaintance Billy Braxton. This time I am sure of it, for I saw the fiery glance from his eye as plainly as I saw the horse that carried him.”

It is proper that we should explain to our readers what Maggy meant by saying that she saw so plainly the fiery glance from the rapid horseman’s eye. Nothing very remarkable in the appearance of Billy Braxton was noticed by his acquaintances in the neighborhood where he formerly resided except a lively and marked expression of his eyes, which manifested itself whenever his general conduct was assailed with reproach and censure by those who were disposed to treat him with the severity it was supposed his course of life deserved. On all such occasions he would erect his person into an attitude of dignity and defiance, and a hundred times it was observed that a flash of painful but withering indignation shot from his eyes, which was as peculiar as it was commanding and dreadful. Maggy had felt it in her own person, and now bore testimony to its awful and fascinating effect. It was a look that was at once dignified and conciliating,—blending in its expression the elements of a suppressed sorrow with the anguish of a proud and turbulent heart.

The moment Maggy made the remark we have mentioned above she was interrupted by Agnes, who exclaimed in apparently fearful accents, “Hush, Maggy ! for the sake of all that is peaceful and orderly, hush ! Between Harry and yourself, if you do not become more quiet and rational, I shall die of fear and vexation. While one of you is calling this poor man a fiend, and the other is surrounding him with fire and brimstone, I almost feel as if I had glimpses of those doleful regions which poor girls like me can never think of but with shocked and uneasy nerves. If he be the Evil One, for goodness’ sake let us suffer him to



pass on quietly, and not endanger our own peace by calling him names which after all perhaps may belong to him as little as to other people."

The half-serious and half-sarcastic manner in which these remarks dropped from the lips of Agnes, completely sealed the mouth of Maggy for the time, who regarded the words she had heard as if they had been uttered in downright earnest. But Harry seemed to understand Agnes better. He had long been acquainted with her vein for pleasantry, and in answer to the language she had just made use of, he slyly observed,—

"Well, Agnes, the next time we meet the fiend you shall have him all to yourself. Maggy and I will act the part of humble lookers-on, and you shall manage him in your own way. You may soothe and flatter him into kindness and civility, if you can. But should he grow troublesome on your hands, remember, you are to depend on your own skill and address—your own courage and sagacity—for deliverance. I can only promise that if you happen to prove a match for his cunning and duplicity, so far as regards myself you shall most certainly receive my hearty congratulations."

"I defy the foul fiend!" exclaimed Agnes, in a theatrical tone that was meant to be ludicrous, and that was so in reality,—“I defy and despise him. And now, Harry,” she continued, “as soon as we have done breakfast, and your nerves are sufficiently composed, be good enough to conduct your charge with a little more politeness, as well as a little more attention to speed, on the further stages of their journey. We have been detained here so long this morning that I am afraid we shall hardly reach the house in time where we intend to rest and take our dinners at noon.”

Harry promised to exert himself, and after breakfast the horses were got out, and our travelers continued their journey with somewhat more than their usual speed. Agnes was evidently disposed to indulge in the same vein of good humor and pleasantry that manifested itself before breakfast. She asked Maggy if she did not think the hartshorn contained in her vinaigrette would form an adequate defense against the fiery overflow, whatever it might be, that streamed so fearfully from the mysterious



horseman's eye. "Should we overtake him again," said she, "as sure as he attempts to scowl on me with that appalling look which frightened you so much this morning, I will most valiantly confront him with the hartshorn, and he shall at least be made to inhale the subtle contents of my vinaigrette for the more baleful fumes of his own poisonous sulphur." Then directing her discourse to Harry, she exclaimed, "Now do, Harry, for the sake of peace and comfort, agree to slacken your pace a little. I doubt very much whether the fleet apparition is at your heels, and even if he were, I think it would puzzle you prodigiously to outride him. At all events, I have some curiosity to see this same specter again, and would be almost willing to dine with him at the same table. But if you continue to drive at this terrible rate we may leave him behind us on the road, or you may cause him to outstrip us from a sheer spirit of pride and emulation."

Harry was now obliged to rein in his horses, although only an hour before he had been reproached on account of his laggard motion, and had been requested by Agnes to quicken his speed. They proceeded, however, at a moderate and steady gait, which brought them in time to the inn where they proposed to stop for dinner. Agnes and her companion were shown into a little apartment adjoining the dining-room, while Harry accompanied the hostler to the stable, for the purpose of seeing proper attention paid to the horses.

In entering the apartment which received our guests they were conducted by the landlord through a door leading from the dining-room, we have just mentioned, but there was another door on the opposite side of this apartment that was now closed, but which they could see from the windows opened out into a back yard. The weather had by this time become somewhat cool and unpleasant, a large fire was blazing in a chimney of uncommonly wide dimensions, and our two females seated themselves in close proximity to the cheerful hearth.

"Why, this huge chimney reminds one," said Agnes to her companion, "of the capacious outworks which formed the appendages of the old baronial castles. The fire-place is large enough to warm a regiment of soldiers, and the flue above might conveniently admit them to drop down



two abreast at our very feet. It would hardly have been safe to occupy such a house as this during our revolutionary war. If the doors had been barricaded so as to exclude intruders from below, it would have been no difficult matter to scale the roof of the building, and scramble down through the chimney from above."

"Thank fortune," observed Maggy, "we have nothing of that kind to fear at present. And yet the world even now is famous for strange sights and apparitions, so that people are liable to be scared to death in broad daylight. I am sure I have been troubled more than a little in trying to banish from my mind that unmannerly knave Billy Braxton, who has kept haunting my imagination ever since we saw him riding along the road like Tam O'Shanter among the witches. It is only this moment that I thought I saw the fierce eye of the creature shining in these very coals of fire."

"Then, sure enough," said Agnes, "he must have dropped down the chimney for the very purpose of paying us a visit. But I am glad, Maggy, that you see him peering from the fire. I think it is hot enough to singe him a little, whether he be spirit, demon, or only flesh and bones."

The moment Agnes uttered these words, the door we have described as leading into the back yard was opened from the outside, and the form of Billy Braxton presented itself before the eyes of the affrighted females. Maggy uttered an involuntary scream, but which she contrived to suppress time enough to prevent a complete exposure of her alarm and weakness. Agnes herself started to her feet, as if ready to combat some concealed danger that she was at a loss to understand, but which she was waiting to see unfold itself in order that she might stand more completely on the defensive. In the midst of this alarm and confusion, Billy himself either felt or feigned some degree of surprise on his part.

"Pardon me, ladies!" he exclaimed after a moment's pause, "but I am afraid I have unwillingly intruded into an apartment that is appropriated to your own privacy." Then, pretending to fix a more studied and particular look of inquiry on the person of Agnes, he cried out, "Why, in the name of wonders, is not this Miss Russell? Surely it is, or my senses are most strangely deceiving me!"



"It is Miss Russell, at your service," replied Agnes in her usual quiet tone, "and if I, too, am not at fault, I believe I see before me the form and person of my old friend and acquaintance Billy Braxton?"

"Precisely so," rejoined her interlocutor. "Billy Braxton, formerly of the neighborhood of Courtland Hall, but now William Braxton, of the City of New York."

When these last words were uttered by Braxton, he deliberately straightened himself up to the utmost height of his full stature, folded his arms across his breast, and sent from his eye that terrible glance of scorn and reproof which, as we have seen, Maggy considered the best evidence of his real identity. But Agnes had by this time so far recovered from the surprise of his intrusion that she resolved not only to preserve, unmoved, her own self-possession, but to learn a little more, if possible, of the strange transformation of her quondam friend and acquaintance. We must first inform our readers, however, that his appearance now differed very materially from that which his person had assumed while riding on horseback. He had got rid of his cap and of his large overcoat, and was arrayed in precisely the same dress that he wore, when in company with Mr. Marshfield, at the period of their visiting the house of Mr. Russell.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Braxton?" said Agnes, after he had so significantly reminded her of his being no longer Billy Braxton, but rather William Braxton, of the City of New York. "The mere change of a name," she continued, "especially when it is so slight, as in your case, can be a matter of but little importance to anybody, but the thorough change of behavior and address in our former acquaintances is calculated to occasion no small surprise in the mind of the most thoughtless person."

"Oh! I understand you," answered Braxton, taking a chair at the same time, and seating himself in the circle round the fire with our two travelers; "but we will not talk of that now. There are few persons in the world whose external conduct corresponds exactly with the thoughts and feelings that are agitating their bosoms within. Let that be a sufficient answer to your inquiries at present. And now, may I not hope that I understand the object of your present journey?"



"That object," rejoined Agnes, "we have no reason to conceal from any one, and especially may we mention it to you, since it is owing partly to your own persuasion that you find us here to-day, so far from our friends and home. To-night we hope to rest in the City of New York, and it is our purpose to embark with Mr. Marshfield as soon after as possible for the coast of California."

"And you have engaged a hotel, I suppose," said Braxton, "where you expect to put up during your stay in the city?"

"I believe Mr. Courtland," replied Agnes, "has made some arrangement of that sort, with the particulars of which, however, I do not profess to be acquainted."

"Then," said Braxton, "let me give you some advice in relation to a matter about which you have a perfect right to consult your own convenience and comfort. Take this card, and let Mr. Courtland drive to the hotel which it describes. I make this suggestion at the request of Captain Lamberton, who feels an interest in your welfare, and who is desirous to see you as comfortably provided for as possible."

Agnes took the card from Braxton, and before she had time to make any further reply, he rose hastily from his seat, walked to the same door at which he had entered a few minutes before, and immediately disappeared in a direction across the back yard.

Just as Braxton withdrew from the door in the manner we have mentioned, Harry entered from the other door that opened from the dining-room.

"You are a most efficient sentinel, to be sure, Harry, in regard to us two distressed damsels!" exclaimed Agnes, as soon as she saw him at the door. "The mysterious ogre, who has been haunting us along the road, and who Maggy would almost declare dropped down from the top of this huge chimney here, has been sitting in this room for a full ten minutes, and might have borne us off to his banqueting place for anything you could have done for us, had we not shown by our own language and address that we did not fear him. And now you come, at the very moment your services are least wanted."

"What does all this mean?" said Harry. "I am sure I do not understand you. I was detained by the man in



the stable so long that it was impossible for me to get here sooner."

"Ay! ay!" answered Agnes. "I am disposed to give full credit to your statement. No doubt he made you believe that your horses in the stable were of more account than your friends in the hostelry. But come, Harry, sit down and you shall hear all."

Agnes then recounted to him every particular that had transpired since they entered the house, and during his absence at the stable. She concluded by delivering him the card which Braxton had passed into her hands, and the invitation of which he said it was Captain Lamberton's wish they should obey.

When Agnes had finished telling her story, which she did not fail to accompany with several remarks that were both sagacious and amusing, Harry put on a face of unusual gravity.

"There is something in this man's conduct," said he, "which is, to say the least of it, highly extraordinary. I am afraid there may be more method in his madness than we are disposed to give him credit for. Are you sure he is the same individual who encountered us so frequently on the road during the last three or four days?"

"Indeed, Harry," answered Agnes, "that is more than I succeeded in finding out with all my boldness. I was fully resolved on asking him the question, but he evaded it so promptly, and parted from us so abruptly, that it seemed to require much more wit than I could justly lay claim to in order properly to accomplish my purpose."

"La, me!" exclaimed Maggy, "what reason is there for disputing about a matter that we must all see is so very plain? Didn't he almost again pierce us through, the audacious impostor, with that fiery eye of his? He thought I wouldn't know him to be the same person, because he hadn't on the same dress he wore in his hobgoblin gallops along the road. But I tell you whether he puts on the appearance of a rollicking ghost, or of plain Billy Braxton, I should know him equally well all over the world. And then to think that he sat chattering, like a knave as he is, in this very room, without once saying so much to his old friend as How do you do, Maggy! But may be, some day or other, I'll be even with him."



"I have been connecting together," said Harry, "the several circumstances we have recently met with as well as I can, and they seem to me to point to some design, part of which I may possibly understand, but the whole drift of which it is utterly out of my power at present to fathom. This man's evident attempt along the road at concealment,—my detention at the stable, which I now strongly believe to have been a contrivance of his own,—the interview effected with you in this room during my absence, in a dress different from that he wore a few days ago, and his abrupt departure as soon as he saw my approach from the dining-room—his reluctance to be questioned about his recent movements, and his desire that we should take lodgings at a hotel in the city pointed out by himself and Captain Lamberton,—all this I say looks very much as if something was intended which is ultimately to affect our own interests. Part of this scheme, as I have hinted, would seem to be to place us under the same roof in the city with Captain Lamberton. Now this must be avoided. I have the address of Mr. Marshfield, to whose lodgings I have promised to repair as soon as we arrive in New York. Thither, therefore, we must direct our course with all convenient dispatch, and so far as regards myself, I feel as if I shall not have properly performed my duty until I have placed you safely, according to promise, under that gentleman's more particular care and protection."

Agnes seemed to see the subject in a great measure as he saw it himself, and perceived no good reason for dissenting from any of his opinions. But although she assumed a somewhat more serious air when they entered the carriage after dinner for the purpose of renewing their journey, yet, as we have said, she was careful to observe in her demeanor a steady and unalterable style of cheerfulness. It was with this same spirit of cheerfulness that all our travelers in the evening reached the great emporium of that portion of our country which they were proud to call their native State.

Although Harry was not very familiar with the streets in the City of New York, he was not long in discovering the location of the hotel in which Mr. Marshfield had his lodgings. As soon as they arrived, our travelers were conducted to an apartment which they were given to un-



derstand would be exclusively devoted to their own use during their stay at the hotel, and in which they were served with everything calculated to render them easy and comfortable.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN morning arrived, the three companions were up early, in order that they might have the more time to complete their preparations for appearing in public. But they resolved to take their repast in their own apartment. This would obviate the necessity of an abrupt meeting with Mr. Marshfield at the public table, which it was the object of all parties to avoid if possible.

After our travelers had dispatched their breakfast, and were ready to receive company, it was proposed that Harry should go in search of Mr. Marshfield, Agnes and Maggy agreeing to occupy their own apartment until his return. It was now the latter part of November, but the weather continued to be unusually fine and pleasant for the season. The sun still shone with a warmth that was soothing and cheerful—hundreds of ladies and gentlemen were busily employed in promenading the public streets—the rivers and the bay around the city seemed to be like great sheets of light under the blue canopy of the skies—the little birds were warbling from cages suspended outside of the windows—and the air was filled with a balmy softness that was truly sweet and exhilarating. On a morning like this, and after a journey so long and fatiguing as the one they had just undergone, it is not surprising that Agnes and her companion should be willing, as much as possible, to participate in its enjoyments. For this purpose they drew their chairs very close to one of the doors of their apartment, which opened out on a long porch, from which there was a full view of the distant Hudson River, and the magnificent bay into which it empties. Harry had not yet returned, and the two females could not very well account for his long absence.



While thus placed together, and occasionally exchanging remarks on the different objects the view before them presented, the attention of Agnes was suddenly directed to the conversation of two gentlemen, who appeared to be sitting on the porch in front of the room next to the one which she and her companion occupied, but whose persons were concealed from her in consequence of her position inside of the door leading from her own apartment. Although she could hardly have permitted herself to form any intentional design of listening to the words that passed between persons with whom she had been accidentally associated; yet, owing to the circumstances under which she was placed, it would have been next to impossible for her to avoid hearing their conversation, however much she might have desired to do so. The following remarks were so distinctly uttered, and had so much interest for the ears of Agnes, that she caught every word spoken by either of the parties :

“Braxton,” said one to the other, “has I think secured to me the benefit of their company, until the vessel in which they are to embark shall be ready to sail on her voyage. They expected to reach the city last evening, but perhaps they found it more convenient to postpone their arrival until this morning.”

“I hope to see them here, at my own lodgings,” answered the other gentleman. “That was the arrangement I made with Mr. Courtland, and that was the arrangement too which I supposed was not only well understood by both of us, but was regarded by yourself as most fitting and agreeable.”

“It would certainly be better,” said his companion, “that I should have an opportunity of becoming a little more intimate with Miss Russell before leaving port, so that we may not feel toward each other as strangers when we shall happen to meet together at San Francisco. And indeed, Mr. Marshfield,” he continued, “I have some notion that she shall embark in the same vessel with myself, which perhaps will be just as agreeable, and will certainly be quite as safe, as if she were placed more immediately under your own charge.”

“That shall never be with my consent,” replied Mr. Marshfield. “I have engaged to become the protector of



the young lady until I shall have placed her at the side of her brother, for which purpose alone she has consented to embark on her expected voyage."

"We shall see more about that in a very short time," rejoined the other speaker. "I did not suppose, Mr. Marshfield, that you would have raised objections about a matter in regard to which we might both have felt very indifferent. In the mean time, I can see no cause why we should attempt to discuss this matter any further. You have been short and emphatic in announcing to me your determination, for which reason, permit me, without further ceremony, to bid you good-morning."

Our readers may know that Agnes Russell listened with no small degree of interest and surprise to this conversation. The persons between whom it took place were, of course, Captain Lamberton and Mr. Marshfield. She could not help noticing that each of them manifested an evident feeling of suspicion and jealousy towards the other, but she found it difficult to comprehend what the exact nature of their feelings was towards herself. She was far from believing that either of them wished to do her any direct injury, and yet their conversation made impressions on her mind that left it in a state of uncertainty and confusion. That both of them desired to exercise an exclusive authority over her as her guardian and protector, she could not doubt, but this she knew was perfectly consistent with the highest regard for her individual welfare and happiness. And yet why should they so captiously oppose each other if both had the same object in view? She could not conceal from herself that what she had just heard caused her considerable uneasiness, and yet she hardly knew what course it would be proper for her to take on the occasion. On looking at Maggy it seemed evident that she had not been equally attentive with herself in listening to what was going on in front of the adjoining apartment, as her countenance had remained perfectly calm and unconcerned during the whole time that was devoted to the conversation between the two gentlemen. But Agnes felt great hesitation in alarming the fears of her companion by betraying her own doubts and uneasiness. As she was herself unable to comprehend the exact meaning of the conversation that had taken place in her hearing, she could



hardly expect that Maggy would be more successful in interpreting its true import. Under these embarrassing circumstances, and before Agnes had clearly determined in her own mind what was the best to be done, she was suddenly interrupted in her reveries by hearing the approach of Harry, in company with the landlord of the hotel and Mr. Marshfield.

Entering with considerable bustle from the porch into the apartment occupied by Agnes and Maggy, Harry exclaimed aloud, "We have discovered the gentleman at last after whom we made such a tedious search this morning. We pushed our inquiries in every direction, and on our return found him sitting in his own apartment. The landlord obligingly assisted me in making this discovery, and we are indebted to him, Agnes, for the pleasure of Mr. Marshfield's company."

Agnes bowed to her visitor, and assured him of the pleasure she experienced in meeting him on the occasion. Maggy was at the same time introduced to Mr. Marshfield; and the landlord, having accomplished his object in bringing the parties together, withdrew to some other part of the hotel where his services were next wanted.

The conversation now carried on between our travelers and Mr. Marshfield had reference mainly to the preparations necessary to be made for the projected voyage. The ship in which this latter gentleman had taken his passage was to sail in two or three days.

While engaged in making these arrangements with Mr. Marshfield, Agnes thought that an evident alteration had taken place in his complexion and appearance since she saw him in company with Braxton at her father's house. He had grown thinner and paler. She even imagined that he breathed with greater difficulty, and that some change had taken place in the color and expression of his eyes. His cough, indeed, might have been better, since his person in all probability has been recently freer from exposure to the effect of the weather, but the hectic flush on his countenance gave indubitable proofs of the ravages his disease was producing on the vital organs within.

After dinner Harry concluded to dispose of his own time in attending to some little matters of business necessary to complete the preparations Agnes was making for her in-



tended voyage, and Maggy proposed to do one or two errands having for their object the accomplishment of the same end.

When her companions had retired, Agnes was left alone in the apartment they occupied, and could not help giving full vent to the feelings which so deeply moved and disturbed her bosom.

"This, then," said she to herself, "is the beginning of an experience that already confuses my understanding and dampens my spirits. I have much to disturb, if I have not much to alarm me. I am conscious of being about to brave a world that is not only filled with sorrow, but is sometimes cruel, uncharitable, and deceitful. Thousands who are exposed to its troubles and anxieties—who are tried by its snares and temptations—thousands who go forth supported with a courage and resolution which belong to rougher natures than mine—who, if their own strength fails, may summon to their assistance the strength of others—are seen daily to become the victims of their presumption and temerity. How, then, is it likely to happen with a timid and defenseless girl, who, if her patience and endurance should desert her, has nothing else on which to rely? I am engaged indeed in a mission of love and duty; but what does the world know or care about an undertaking like this? I am about to endure fatigue and anxiety—privation and peril—for the purpose of becoming the deliverer of one who is near and dear to me. But who will thank me for the dangers and sufferings to which I willingly expose myself but he alone, and one or two others, for whom they are encountered? And yet I am not so weak or so stupid as to forget where my real strength lies. It is the solitary star that sometimes shines loveliest and brightest. It is the humblest flower that sometimes sends forth the most grateful odor. It is the feeblest heart that is often endowed from above with the greatest share of strength and resistance. May it not be more noble to struggle alone than to rely on the assistance of those who are frequently unable, and much more frequently unwilling, to stand by us in our greatest need? There is an arm above which is constantly outstretched to save the humble and the innocent. I will endeavor to make that arm my trust. I will abjure all confidence in



my own strength, and, with the smooth pebble from the brook, will boldly withstand the giant difficulties by which I am opposed."

It was with such reflections and such resolutions as these that Agnes Russell armed her mind and heart to meet the sorrows and trials which she had too much reason to suppose awaited the future progress of her mission. So far from shrinking from what she believed to be the simple discharge of her duty, she now felt a renewed consciousness of her inward strength and security, and looked forward with hope and triumph to a successful termination of all the sorrows and sufferings she might be called to encounter.

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## CHAPTER XV.

WHILE thus employed in fortifying her mind against the perils of her situation, and just at the moment when her strength and confidence had become greatest, she was somewhat surprised, as well as alarmed, at the sudden entrance of the landlord into her quiet apartment, followed by no less a personage than our familiar acquaintance, Mr. William Braxton.

"This is Miss Russell," said the landlord, as he formally ushered Braxton into the presence of his guest—after which he immediately retired without speaking another word.

"I hope," exclaimed Braxton, as he entered the room, "that Miss Russell will pardon the liberty I have presumed to exercise in thus making my appearance again before her. But she may rest assured that nothing but a strict sense of duty which I owe to another as well as to herself—could have urged me to this second intrusion."

On hearing these words, so politely uttered by her old friend of simple and shabby memory, but whose present important air and manners were calculated to give to his character no little degree of suspicion, the first impulse of Agnes was to reply with something like marked severity.



But a moment's hesitation led her to believe that her better plan would be to deal with him more after his own fashion. She therefore politely invited him to take a seat, while at the same time she instinctively pushed her chair farther from his, as if on purpose to let him know that she did not fully approve of his visit.

"And pray, sir," said she, as soon as they were seated together, "explain, if you please, why it is that you regard your visit, so unexpected to me, as an indispensable duty. I am quite anxious to be informed of the particular business you have with me on the present occasion."

"Alas!" replied Braxton, "it is after all a matter that may be understood in a moment of time. You saw proper to disregard the advice of Captain Lamberton on the subject of selecting lodgings during your stay in the city. This treatment has occasioned much mortification to his feelings, especially as he was desirous of befriending you on a point of still greater importance, relating to your expected voyage to California."

"Say to Captain Lamberton, if you please," said Agnes, drawing her person to an erect position in the chair she occupied, "that I shall ever try to be grateful for all the favors I am sensible of having received, or that I may hereafter receive, from a person who owes me nothing, and with whom I have a very slight and limited acquaintance. But let him know that I do not now feel, so far as I understand my own wants, that there is any necessity for his immediate services. Make this known to him as my brief and simple answer. And now, Billy Braxton," she continued, fixing her dark keen eyes on the countenance of her visitor, which was cast in troubled perplexity on the floor, "whatever be your character or pretensions at present, suffer me to address you as I heretofore did when we lived together in the country, and when you seemed to be frank, simple, and honest, in all your intercourse with myself and others. Inform me at once, without any efforts at disguise or concealment, what the standing of this Captain Lamberton is in the world, and what real interest he feels in my own welfare. I make this request, because from what I have lately observed in your carriage and deportment, I have every reason to believe that you understand



this man much better than I once would have thought it was in your power to do."

"Why," said Braxton, with much gravity, "do you seek to make me instrumental in administering to a curiosity, which I am persuaded it would be better you should not have gratified at present? I have already told you that I am no longer Billy Braxton, and therefore you have the less right to interrogate me in that character. As a different person—as a man of business, and the world—I am obliged, even if I had it in my power to do otherwise, to withhold a satisfactory answer to your questions."

"Be it so then," rejoined Miss Russell with sternness. "But if you are prevented from answering my questions touching the character and conduct of Captain Lamberton, disclose to me, at least, the mystery which has so remarkably changed your own deportment and appearance. Make me sensible of the causes which have operated to transform my old friend and neighbor, Billy Braxton, once so plain, and apparently so innocent and artless, into the shrewd, graceful, and bustling Mr. William Braxton, gentleman and man of business, of the City of New York."

"It is of little consequence, Miss Russell," answered Braxton, "that you should understand this mystery. There is some philosophy at the bottom of it, which a mind like your own may indeed be capable of understanding, but which I am convinced would benefit you very little to comprehend at present. Perhaps at some future period, what now appears to you so very dark and mysterious will unfold itself as having originated from circumstances which are not peculiar to my own experience in life. Till that period shall arrive, be willing to think charitably of your old acquaintance, and do not believe that his movements are necessarily connected either with the Prince of the Power of the Air, or with those less interior agents of evil who more openly perpetrate their nefarious schemes of mischief in every highway and by-path of this world. And as an important sequel to these remarks, suffer me to make one request, which I am strongly inclined to believe it is of the utmost concern to your future peace and happiness that you should unreservedly comply with. In all your relations hereafter with myself, no matter how dark and ambiguous may ap-



pear to be the events which shall bring us together, never doubt for a single instant the integrity and good faith of your old friend Billy Braxton."

The moment this singular being had uttered the above remarkable speech, he bowed politely to Miss Russell, and before she had time to make the least reply, he had withdrawn from the room, and his steps were scarcely audible at the foot of the stairway which led down to the main entrance of the building.

Our readers may readily suppose that the interview which took place between Agnes Russell and Billy Braxton had a most powerful effect on the mind of the former. It was evident that something dark and unaccountable attended the movements of Captain Lamberton, the mystery of which it was utterly out of her own power to fathom. And the mystery in relation to Braxton was still more calculated to elude her closest scrutiny. How she was to regard these two individuals became a question to her of no little moment. Were their intentions toward her good or evil? Braxton seemed to give her assurances of the interest which Captain Lamberton felt in her welfare, and yet when she considered his whole conversation taken together, she could not but entertain some doubts in regard to his motives and intentions. These doubts were confirmed by the conversation she had overheard between Captain Lamberton and Mr. Marshfield, which left an impression on her mind unfavorable to the designs which the former might have in view concerning her. But how was she to extricate herself from these perplexing difficulties? She was embarked on the discharge of a most sacred duty, which it would not do for her to abandon on account of some supposed dangers, which after all might only exist in her own imagination. She moreover took courage from the earnestness with which she heard Mr. Marshfield declare himself to be her protector, and the resolution he expressed of seeing her in safety at the side of her brother. She seemed likewise to place great reliance on the declaration made by Braxton, that she should at no time thereafter suffer herself to distrust his fealty and attachment to her person. All these considerations, together with her religious trust and confidence in an unseen arm, nerved her for the further prosecution of the task she had under-



taken, and brought her to the firm determination to suffer matters to take their course until a more satisfactory development should be made to her own mind.

She had scarcely arrived at this reasonable conclusion, and regained her former cheerful composure, when her peace was again somewhat disturbed by the hasty entrance of Maggy, whose countenance betrayed unequivocal marks of anxiety and concern. The emotions of her frame were so obvious to the perception of her companion, that the latter could not help alluding to them the moment she made her appearance in her presence.

"You seem flurried, Maggy," said Agnes, before the former had time to lay aside any part of her dress, or to utter a single word in relation to her evening's adventures. "You really look as if you had been frightened by a second ghost, perhaps seen as palpably stalking about the streets of New York City as the first was seen riding along the public thoroughfares of the country. Do tell me, my child, what has happened to you."

"You are most wonderful quick in making discoveries," said Maggy, "for indeed I have seen something to-day which would have frightened us both had we been walking together at the same time."

"Permit me then to ask, Maggy," answered Agnes, "what you saw that was so very frightful and alarming?"

"I am at a loss to know," said Maggy, "why our old friends and neighbors, who once dwelt so kindly and so happily about Courtland Hall, should have all turned against me, and not only so, but should have become so much changed as almost to lose the mortal likeness which once seemed to become them so well. It was but the other day that that impudent weather-cock, Billy Braxton, seemed to be playing his pranks along the road in a style that was just as proud as it was weak and childish—bad luck to him!—pretending that he was too good or too great to speak to one who had frequently fed him when he was hungry, and sheltered him when, perhaps, he had scarcely a wisp of straw on which to lay his head. And now again I have just been jostled and passed by in contempt by another, whose appearance has certainly not improved for the better since he left home, and whose pride seems to have grown as tall and as fast as the rosebush



that he planted in our little garden, and which he was always bidding me to call after your own beautiful name."

Agnes felt a very perceptible tremor agitate her bosom at this simple speech delivered by Maggy, and with her utmost effort at maintaining her self-possession, she found herself unable to do more than exclaim in a faltering voice, "Do, Maggy, tell me what you mean!"

"Why, then," said Maggy, "to be plain with you, it is but ten minutes since I met Mr. Percy Courtland in the street, and would gladly have taken him by the hand, and told him all about home, and about you. But when he saw me he forced himself directly into the crowd at the market-house, as if he had never been nursed in these arms, or had never slept when a child in this bosom."

Agnes turned round, and recoiled a moment from the sudden shock that had been given to her feelings. Then summoning to her assistance all the strength she was mistress of, she remarked with more composure and calmness, "Perhaps this time, Maggy, you were positively mistaken."

"Not one tittle was I mistaken, depend on it, Miss Agnes," said the affectionate girl. "It is true, he was altered in his looks and appearance, but I nevertheless knew him all the same as if I had seen him working on his father's own comfortable farm."

"You say that he was altered in his looks, Maggy," answered Agnes. "Had you a view of his face? Did he appear sad or cheerful? Was his color pale or red? But I can hardly think you had a very fair sight of his person."

"Just as fair a sight of his person, Miss Agnes, as I now have of your own. And indeed he was paler than when I knew him at his father's house, and I am afraid a good deal sadder too, although I could not so certainly tell that on account of his vanishing with so much speed into the crowd. But ah, my pretty darling, you look pale yourself. Sure nothing has happened to distress you since I parted from you this afternoon? Pray tell me what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, Maggy!" replied Agnes. "Nothing that can occasion me any lasting uneasiness. A slight palpitation of the heart, which will pass away as suddenly



as it came." Then, rallying her spirits, she continued, "And his dress, Maggy! how was it with his dress? Was it worn and neglected, or did he appear as neat and comfortable as when he left his father's house?"

"Shabby! shabby!" muttered Maggy to herself, as if unwilling to disclose all that she knew. "But your ladyship should not take these things too hard. Percy was always a good boy, and if the world is a little hard with him at present, no doubt he will learn in time how to accommodate himself to its whims, and will make his way through life like any other gentleman."

"I hope so!" responded Agnes "And should you ever meet him again, under more favorable circumstances, I think you will hardly have occasion to believe that Percy Courtland could willfully neglect you or any of his other friends."

There can be no doubt at all but that Agnes Russell was deeply affected with the statement so simply and earnestly made by Maggy. Although she had been brought up in the country for the most part herself, yet she had learned enough of mankind from books, and from hearing the conversation of persons deeply immersed in worldly business, to suspect very strongly that Percy Courtland, as a young adventurer, was just now brought to that important crisis of his life when our courage and endurance are most severely tried, and our principles are subjected to an exposure that must either convert them into a shield for our future protection, or leave us forlorn and shipwrecked on the great ocean of life. There is a time in the affairs of almost every young man when his hopes and fears make a loud and earnest appeal to the soundness of his faith, and the efficacy of those virtuous and good affections which religion and education have been instilling into his mind from his earliest childhood. This is the turning-point on which depends his future success or disappointment in the world. If he has learned how to exercise the virtues of patience, resignation, and hope—if he has been taught to cultivate gentleness of speech and manners, rather than to lean on his own immature strength for safety—if he is resolved to make himself loved rather than feared—if his object is to become useful before he can expect to exercise power—if he endeavors to serve man-



kind before he asks mankind to serve him,—then may he calculate with great certainty on future prosperity and happiness. But if he feels himself restless and impatient under the restraints which are necessarily imposed on his ignorance and inexperience—if he places too much reliance on his own wisdom and judgment—if he values his services too highly, and attempts to command before he has legitimately risen to a proper station of authority—if he is unamiable and disobliging in his manners—headstrong and imperious in his disposition,—the prospect before him is but the promise of a more severe and more prolonged struggle with the evils which he heretofore professed to despise. In either case there is much to suffer, and much on which to exercise the noblest and best qualities of the heart. But in the one the tide of events leads on to fortune—in the other there is danger of its ending in the shoals and quicksands of disgrace and disappointment. Ought we to wonder that Agnes Russell feared for the future peace and happiness of her youthful associate?

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## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Harry returned to the hotel that evening, Agnes had but little to say in relation to the occurrences which had transpired during his absence. She rehearsed indeed what Maggy had stated about seeing his brother during her walk round the city, and the hasty manner in which he had apparently attempted to elude her observation. But she passed it all over as a matter about which Maggy might readily have been mistaken, and from which it would hardly be proper to draw any certain deductions. Nor was she more communicative on the subject of the visit she had received from Billy Braxton, barely mentioning that he had called for the purpose of inquiring why they had not availed themselves of the friendly advice that had been given them, by Captain Lamberton, to seek for other lodgings. Her great reason for being so silent on these



several subjects arose principally from the tenderness she felt for her father, and for her other friends who remained at home at Courtland Hall. She was unwilling that any information should be carried back to them calculated to raise in their minds the slightest apprehensions of her own safety, and she was equally unwilling to alarm her two companions, who had journeyed with her to the great city.

The next morning Mr. Marshfield called to inform them that the vessel on which Agnes expected to embark would sail the following day. Every arrangement had been made by her and her companion to be ready for the occasion. Harry had exerted himself much to forward and complete these preparations, and of course intended waiting until he should take a solemn farewell of his friends at the moment the vessel engaged to receive them was about to leave port. On the day appointed for this purpose Mr. Marshfield kindly waited on Agnes and her companion, in order to accompany them to the ship which lay still closely moored in front of the city. At the appointed time they took leave of their host at the hotel, and walked down to the wharf together. The weather had now become somewhat sharper, and Mr. Marshfield gave strong indications of not being so well pleased with the change. It was evident he felt chilly, if not uncomfortably cold. But he had taken every precaution to shield himself against the severity of the atmosphere, and although his countenance manifested unequivocal signs of a state of feeling not compatible with perfect good health, yet he continued to converse with cheerfulness and ease until they were all pleasantly seated in the cabin of the ship appointed for their reception.

The vessel was not much crowded, and the appearance of the passengers was such as to give promise of a quiet voyage at least, if not of a pleasant one.

It seemed at last that all had arrived who were expected to constitute the list of passengers engaged for the contemplated voyage. Agnes now looked about her with less concern. She began to discourse with Harry in an animated and lively mood, and to rally him on his seriousness, and apparent want of spirits. "The separation of friends," she whispered in his ear, "is one of those evils



which we ought to bear with the greater cheerfulness, because there is always a hope, and a very strong hope too, that we shall be permitted to meet again at some future time. Do you think, Harry, that we are now about to part from each other forever? Certainly not. And whether our meeting again hereafter shall be in this world or in that brighter world which so many regard as a land of dreams only, but which we may believe is full of the most pleasing and delightful realities, it will be only the more joyful on account of the deep sorrow which the separation at first occasioned. So cheer up, my boy, and let us part like friends, whose duties may lie in opposite directions, but whose enjoyments may meet and mingle again, when each of us shall have faithfully moved in that sphere where Providence has cast our lot. Go tell the friends of Agnes Russell that she leaves her native land full of hope and exultation. Tell them that the difficulties of her mission only serve to endear and exalt it to the height of her faith and devotion."

Harry was awed by the warm sentiments of his companion, and remained almost speechless on the occasion. Taking her hand into his with a warm and convulsive grasp, he had only firmness enough to say, "Farewell, Agnes! You carry with you my sincerest prayers for your welfare, and I will endeavor, however feebly, to report your courage and determination to those who love you." Then bidding an affectionate adieu to Maggy, Harry Courtland hastily emerged from the cabin, and in a moment afterwards was retracing his steps back to the hotel, from which he resolved to depart early next morning.

When Harry had disappeared, Agnes took a more leisurely survey of the crowd of passengers who were still busy in passing and repassing each other, like a swarm of bees that has not yet found a convenient place to settle. She saw some faces she did not like, some that were more agreeable but not very attractive, and a few in which she found a greater degree of sympathy. There were not more than three or four females on board the ship besides herself and Maggy, and among these she fancied it would be hard for her to select any one with whom she could associate as a constant companion. But turning away from this reconnoitering with a sigh, her attention was all at



once attracted by a gentleman standing at the other end of the cabin, accompanied by a young lady who might be sixteen or seventeen years of age.

The gentleman was dressed in black, but showed a countenance at once mild, grave, and intelligent,—illuminated with a light which was as strong as it was benignant and cheerful. And yet his face, so far from being all sunshine, every now and then seemed to pass under a cloud, which was transparent indeed, but shaded the bright light reflected from behind it. These shadows might have been occasioned by disease, perhaps by sorrow, or, as too frequently happens, by both together, but they were as agreeably changeable as the mist that hangs on the morning landscape in summer. If they obstructed the light for a moment, they only rendered it the more brilliant afterwards.

During the period Agnes sat thus employed in surveying and studying the countenances of her fellow-voyagers, she had occasionally exchanged remarks with Mr. Marshfield on different subjects. And now that she took such a deep interest in the person and appearance of the stranger on whose arm the young lady was leaning, she felt as if she would like to receive some further information in regard to his character and history. "It seems to me," said Agnes, addressing herself to Mr. Marshfield, "that the gentleman standing yonder dressed in black, who so fondly regards the young lady at his side, has something in his countenance calculated to attract the notice of those around him. I suppose, sir, you never had the pleasure of his acquaintance?"

"Your supposition," answered Mr. Marshfield, "is not correct. That gentleman I have known for a number of years. His name is Stanley, and for a short time officiated as a minister of the Episcopal Church, in a country village. But he lost his wife, soon after the birth, I presume, of the young lady who now accompanies him, and with his wife he lost his health. Since that sad event he has spent much of his time in traveling, and in attending to the education of this his only child. But it seems to me he looks better now than he did a year or two ago."

"And yet," said Agnes, "I can hardly think he is in possession of very improved health. But that sweet girl



looks both healthy and happy. Her countenance certainly indicates a most charming state of innocence and cheerfulness."

"I have never had an opportunity of observing the daughter very closely," rejoined Mr. Marshfield, "but if I may be permitted to judge of her disposition from what I know of her father, I should suppose her to be a most amiable creature indeed. After the vessel shall have got fully under way, and the passengers have accommodated themselves to their several places in the cabin, you shall have an introduction to both of them."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

THE vessel was now undergoing the preparatory arrangements of being loosed from her moorings at the wharf. All hands on deck were busied in weighing anchor, and in attending to the other measures necessary for her departure. The loud and peremptory commands of the captain—the jovial songs of the mariners—the furling and unfurling of sails, and the shrill rattling of the spars and tackling—imparted a momentary interest even to the minds of persons standing on the wharf, who had merely assembled to see the noble ship off. But these busy preparations had a still more decided effect on the minds of the passengers. There is indeed something which seems to give to each of us a kind of personal importance whenever we are brought under circumstances like those to which we have just alluded. We feel as if all the noise and commotion around us—as if the concentration of so much labor and activity—the exercise of so much strength and energy—the combinations of so many agencies and of so much enterprise—were directly brought together for our own personal and individual purposes. Our vanity is somewhat excited at the time, although we may be too wise or too cunning to suffer others to know what is passing within our own bosoms.



In a short time the gallant ship was completely freed from her trammels, and was gliding forward from the shore to which a few minutes before she had been fast anchored in front of the city. At this period Agnes expressed a desire to visit the deck, in order that she might witness more fully the spectacle of her native land receding from behind her in the far distance. The sight to her unaccustomed eyes was novel and impressive. It was now late in the afternoon, and the rays of the declining sun were reflected in one broad sheet of flame from out the wide expanse of waters before her. The same glorious light rested on the tall spires of the city, and on the islands and promontories that studded the bay as they passed out into the wide, wide ocean. Every fading gleam of sunshine reminded Agnes of some darling joy she had left behind—of some tender connection that might be eternally sundered—of some fond pursuit she might have relinquished forever—of some favorite spot she might never visit more. “Farewell,” she said to herself, “farewell, my native land. I see thee still to-day as the home of my childhood and youth—as the birthplace of my joys and sorrows. But to-morrow thou shalt have vanished from my sight, and I may see thee no more forever!”

Before Agnes had recovered from this melancholy reverie, Mr. Marshfield, who stood at her side, and who could not but observe the profound meditation into which she had unconsciously fallen, suddenly addressed her as follows:

“You seem to be absorbed in your own reflections, Miss Agnes. Pray what is it in which you find so much interest?”

“In everything around me,” answered Agnes. “In the illimitable expanse of waters—in the bright light that lingers so beautifully on the fading landscape—in the glorious sheet of flame that illumines the depth of the extended bay—in the receding shores on which possibly I may never set my footsteps again.”

“And in yonder setting sun,” rejoined Mr. Marshfield, “rapidly sinking in the west, as if he were just about to be forever quenched in the dark and turbulent waves of the ocean.”

“Not forever,” hastily responded Agnes, “not forever,



Mr. Marshfield. That would be an image which would certainly give me pain if I could view it as you seem to do. Ah, no, sir! that sun will rise again to-morrow with ten times more splendor than accompanies his going down this evening."

"And what is the inference," said Mr. Marshfield, "that you would draw from a fact we witness every day, but from which after all but few of us seem to derive any great wisdom?"

"I would infer," replied Agnes, "that the earthly light which illumines our frail bodies at present is not to be forever quenched in the dark shadows that must cover us in the grave."

"But what reason have you for coming to a conclusion that some of the wisest men of the world have rejected as untenable and fanciful?"

"I have a thousand reasons," answered Agnes, "which, if they do not fall within the rules of worldly wisdom, are at least satisfactory to myself. I feel it in the glow of my own aspiring mind—in the sublimity of my thoughts—in the strength and purity of my affections. I see it in the glory and beauty of this outward sphere, which assures me there must be something higher and better somewhere else, where sin and sorrow will not be suffered to darken the images that there have an abiding and substantial existence. I know it from the pervading influence which impresses on the soul, even of the savage, that there is another state of being far more holy and happy than that which he enjoys in the present world."

Mr. Marshfield gazed on the face of Agnes as if to assure himself that he was listening to remarks which, although he had heard a thousand times before, yet coming from her on an occasion so unexpected and so simple, carried with them a force and meaning calculated to make a lasting impression on his mind. Then turning to her again after a brief pause, he replied:

"But you who can so beautifully and accurately reason from the notions of your own bosom, and from the works of creation which lie open to your external senses, how are you impressed with what are generally believed to be the corresponding truths of revelation? Do you find the same assurance of immortality in the one that you do in the other?"



“Not indeed, the same assurance,” answered Agnes, “but a much higher degree of evidence in divine revelation than in the revelation of nature. In the revelation of God’s word there is, indeed, the same secrecy—the same incomprehensible wisdom—the same apparent incongruities—the same undivulged mysteries—that are contained in the works of creation. As both have proceeded from a like divine origin, they must be surrounded with precisely the same deep covering, and so far as regards their hidden meaning to the mere natural understanding, must be attended with a like interior difficulty. But apart from this, there is a language of truth in revelation, adapted to the natural mind, which the simplest understanding may comprehend much more readily than it can the volume of nature. It is the adaptation of truth to our present imperfect mental capacity, that gives an infinite superiority to the Bible over the more obscure handwriting we find inscribed on the works of creation. And this truth unfolds itself more and more as the superior degrees of our mind are in a wonderful manner more and more opened from above to receive it. But, indeed, Mr. Marshfield,” added Agnes, with great frankness and simplicity, “I believe our conversation has unintentionally struck on a very grave subject, which I am afraid is hardly accommodated to the tastes and modes of thinking of those around us. When our attention a few minutes ago was called to witness the glories of the setting sun, I suppose that neither of us thought of rising from this world to penetrate the sublime mysteries of heaven.”

“Well, I am sure I did not,” rejoined Mr. Marshfield; “and yet having ascended with you as my better angel, I must confess that I felt somewhat indifferent about returning so soon again to earth.”

It must not be supposed that Mr. Marshfield had the slightest intention of uttering this remark in a spirit of gallantry. It was one of those happy expressions which found its way to his lips unsought, and was the natural effect of that elevated state of feeling which the earnest but simple remarks of Agnes so suddenly imparted to his own mind. The truth is, the faith of Mr. Marshfield was not yet firmly established on the testimony of either nature or revelation. Like many other men in the world, he had led a busy, sometimes an anxious, and latterly a wearisome



life—and laboring under all this care and anxiety, although he did not entirely forget the early religious impressions that had been made on his mind by his pious parents, he often suffered these impressions to become weak and indistinct; and amid the absorbing earthly interests in which he had sometimes been engaged, found them clinging to his existence but as a dream in which he once delighted, but the reality of which was gradually fading from his memory. A change, however, had lately come over the temper of his dream. Misfortune, dissatisfaction with the world, a more vivid perception of the vanity and emptiness of his own pursuits, increasing infirmities, and an abiding sense of confirmed sickness, had roused like giants the specters of his former thoughts and wishes, now loudly clamoring to have their doubts and difficulties satisfied. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he should have listened with deep interest to the language made use of on the present occasion by Agnes, which seemed, he could scarcely tell how or why, to appeal to his own unsettled mind with the force and clearness of inspiration. He was never so well pleased—he was never so much moved—as he was by the few strong and emphatic words that had just been uttered by this simple girl. He did not stop long to inquire into the secret of this sudden hold on his faith. It seemed to be a matter of indifference to him whether it proceeded from the sublimity of her language, from the truth of her message, or from the manner in which she attempted to impress it on his understanding. All that he knew was that it affected him deeply, and that he was anxious to learn more in relation to the subject she had brought so vividly before him.

“It is strange,” he afterward said to himself, “that my understanding should have been more enlightened by the conversation of this unpretending female than by a thousand arguments from more learned and skillful reasoners. It shone like the phosphorescent fire that sometimes plays round the path of the ship sailing in mid-ocean, and which is as bright as it is difficult to account for. I will not attempt to investigate this singular influence with too much nicety. But I feel strongly disposed, when a proper opportunity shall offer, to avail myself of more light from the same pleasing source.”



There are moments in which the strong man is brought to bow down in willing submission before the weak and humble. Walter Marshfield had once acted a conspicuous part in the gay and busy world. He would have been too proud at that time willingly to admit that his reason could be convinced by arguments coming from any one not distinguished for learning, intellect, or eloquence. To have felt otherwise he would have regarded as a reproach to his own understanding. But now we behold him listening to a simple maiden, and longing to obtain that solution of his doubts from her which he despaired of obtaining from all the world besides.

It is remarkable with what singular indifference Agnes apparently beheld the impressions she could not but believe she had made on the mind of her friend. But this apparent indifference, in all probability, did not betray the exact state of her heart. She had perhaps before this discovered, or suspected, the true nature and extent of Mr. Marshfield's skepticism; and although she was unwilling to believe that her own feeble efforts would have the slightest tendency to remove it, yet she well knew that there would be less likelihood of effecting this object by dictatorial officiousness, if it could be effected at all, than by that unobtrusive softness and modesty so exclusively belonging to the female mind. It was for this reason, perhaps, that Agnes, with her usual discernment, suspended so abruptly the conversation commenced between them, which otherwise might have been prolonged to an unreasonable limit.

Nor was Agnes able to restrain the strong bent of her disposition, which so frequently, under the gravest circumstances, would seek occasion for good humor and merriment. Almost all the other passengers had retired to the cabin below, and night was approaching, when notice was given that supper was on the table. Agnes still lingered and gazed in the direction of the dark shadows that lined the shore, and the receding lights that might be seen dimly blazing in the distant city. Mr. Marshfield reminded her of the signal that had been made for the evening meal. But she seemed only the more intently engaged in watching the lights across the bay, or tracing the bubbles that rose and disappeared in the wake of the rapid vessel. "You *must* come!" at length he exclaimed with some im-



patience. "You forget, my friend, that we are perhaps putting our fellow-passengers to some inconvenience, and, what is of equal importance to myself, that I am hungry, and feel seriously disposed to satisfy the cravings of my own appetite."

"Alas!" said Agnes, "how readily do we betray the vulgarity of our natures. A moment ago you professed to be an angel, and were willing to linger away from earth amid the spiritual beauties and pleasures of Paradise. But now you exhibit yourself as a gross inhabitant of this lower world, with no higher object in view than to indulge your longing appetite for—bread and butter."

Having uttered this remark, with a drawling and hesitating emphasis bestowed on the last three words, she walked at the side of Mr. Marshfield, and descended with him into the cabin.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next morning, agreeably to what Mr. Marshfield had before promised, Agnes had the pleasure of being formally introduced to Mr. Stanley. She rejoiced to find that she was able to approach him with that easy familiarity which we always feel in the presence of those whose qualities of mind and disposition are congenial with our own. There seemed to be the enjoyment in her presence of the same kind of ease and freedom on his part. He drew near to her with the most cordial greeting, seated himself at her side, and declared how much reason he had to be glad of an introduction which he hoped would be productive of mutual gratification and benefit. He then, with parental feeling and politeness, put the hand of his daughter into hers, and exhorted them both to a nearer acquaintance. "You must love her, Letitia," said he to his child, "as your friend and companion, and no doubt Miss Agnes will love you in return."

"I will certainly not fail to obey your instructions," said Letitia, "so far as it is in my power. But you know, father, that my love for you and my dear departed mother



has been so great, that perhaps I may not have enough to spare to win from this lady a proper feeling of love in return."

Mr. Stanley appeared to be deeply affected with the words which had so frankly and tenderly fallen from the lips of his child. He paused, as if in some doubt how to frame an answer to her remarks, and was seen to raise his hand to his eyes, engaged in brushing away an unbidden tear which he was anxious to conceal from the observation of his companions. Agnes was prompt in taking advantage of this short pause to put in an answer herself, which she saw at once would be the best means of freeing the tender parent from his sudden embarrassment.

"Do not, Miss Letitia, feel the least concerned on my account," she proceeded immediately to say. "Your warm affection expressed for your parents is to me the surest guarantee of a love you are no doubt able to extend to all. You may not, indeed, love others with the same fervor and devotion, nor is it expected that you should do so; but if the stream should not be so deep, there is every reason to believe that it will be equally clear and transparent."

"That is very well said," rejoined Mr. Marshfield. "Our love, in this life, cannot always be expected to burn with equal ardor, nor does it flow out in equal portions at all times and under all circumstances. A love so equal and unbounded may perhaps characterize the feelings of angels, but never, I think, the bosoms of mortals in a world so imperfect and disordered as our own."

"That men and angels love in the same way, and from the same motives," answered Agnes, "I imagine is hardly possible, since the love of one is only natural and the other is spiritual. One individual may love another most fervently, although he may very well believe that the object of his love is possessed of many qualities that are unamiable and hateful. It is the angels alone who love constantly, impartially, and truly."

"And yet there is something noble in human love," said Mr. Marshfield, "even when it is expended on an unworthy object."

"I believe you are right," answered Agnes. "But the true reason is, because human love, no matter how it is exercised, corresponds with celestial love. We seem to be so



constituted that we admire what is good, even when we feel that good in us to be egregiously distorted and perverted."

"You do not mean," said Mr. Marshfield, "that we admire what is insincere and hypocritical?"

"Not exactly that," replied Miss Russell, "although I mean something that, on investigation, perhaps, will be thought to be not very far from it. For instance, who does not admire the virtues of politeness and the graces of elegant manners? These would seem to have constituted nearly the whole drift of Chesterfield's philosophical system. And yet we all know that these virtues may be exercised from motives which, so far from being humble and charitable, are in a supreme degree selfish, worldly, and hypocritical."

"But," observed Mr. Marshfield, "that would only be in cases where the exercise of these virtues would be simulated and insincere."

"Then," replied Agnes, "I am afraid there is very little sincerity in the world. We are all in the habit of making use of phrases and gestures, the true meaning of which we never take the least pains to understand. The man who writes a challenge to his bitterest enemy, and whose blood he is thirsting for with a fiendish appetite, will commence his murderous note of defiance by making use of the words dear sir; and his enemy, who is willing to seek his opponent's life in the same way, will agree to these terms of massacre by signing himself his obedient servant, or by making use of some set phrase equally polite and obliging. Now, this kind of language runs through the whole alphabet of genteel manners in society, and yet no one thinks for a moment that he has departed from the correct standard of truth. But upon my word," said Agnes turning her face toward Mr. Stanley, and looking at him with an apologetic expression of her whole person, "here is our friend, Mr. Stanley, listening to a dry and tedious discussion, which must tax his patience almost beyond endurance, and neither of us has thought of exercising that very politeness toward him, by apologizing for our conduct, which we pretend to say is so common in the world. I am afraid, Mr. Marshfield, that you and I are not only destitute of those very principles of politeness which all are in



the habit of observing, because all believe them to be essential, as society is at present constituted, to our ease and enjoyment at least, if not to our permanent happiness, but that we are in reality unconsciously selfish and stupid."

Mr. Stanley had been listening to Agnes with fixed and almost breathless attention, and when these last remarks had raised him to a still higher pitch of interest, he could not but gaze on her with surprise. But it was not so much the force of her arguments, or the fluency of her language, that gave such a deep interest to her discourse. These undoubtedly were somewhat remarkable, considering that they proceeded from a young lady who, as he had been informed by Mr. Marshfield, made no great pretensions either to wisdom or learning. But there was something in her conversation, apart from these, which had a tendency to elicit the profoundest attention from those who were brought to listen to her remarks. The matter, indeed, was grave, and her language not unfrequently lofty and original, but at the same time her manner was so easy and graceful, and her elocution so simple and unconstrained, making music like a clear stream purling over rocks and water-falls, that all who heard her were charmed with the pleasure her natural ease and simplicity occasioned.

In reply to the remarks she had just concluded, and which were more particularly addressed to the ears of Mr. Stanley, that gentleman merely remarked that "he thought no apology at all was necessary for the conversation, to which he had been listening with deep interest."

"Well," said Agnes, "I would much rather listen to the loud dashing of the waves, and the hoarser prattle of the ocean. I can feel," she continued, "that the sea is becoming rough, and that the billows are tossing fiercer and higher. I think we shall all be made sensible of that before long, even should we resolve to remain here below in our state-rooms. But come, Letitia," she said, seizing hold of her young friend's arm, and slipping it into her own, "we will mount on deck, and witness the sublimity of air, ocean, and skies, while it is still in our power."

So saying, she glided with her companion from out the cabin, and in a moment afterward she and Miss Stanley were together walking on the deck. The weather had



changed considerably since the preceding day. The wind was high, and, as Agnes had remarked, the surface of the sea began to swell with turbulent motion, so as to make it difficult for the young ladies to maintain a precisely erect position in the movements of their promenade.

"This is grand! this is sublime!" exclaimed Agnes. "It makes us feel that we too can war with the elements. See how the white-caps are mustering their forces, as if preparing to vindicate the authority of the ocean. And far away yonder is a fishing smack, which looks no larger than an infant's cradle; but it rocks a thousand times more furiously. It seems to me it would require but little additional force to tip it over completely, which would be a noble revenge for the cruelty with which it preys on the finny tribes below. Perhaps, if they could speak, they would pronounce it to be but a just turning of the tables. Then instead of fishes becoming food for men, men would become food for fishes. But hold up, my dear Letitia. I do not intend, if I can help it, that you shall fall overboard; for if you did, I am afraid we have no one on deck sufficiently brain-sick to venture his worthless life for your sake. The dolphins would catch you, and eat you, too, before there would be time to muster a single hero to the rescue. There again! Why, my child, you are becoming as helpless as a floating wreck on the edge of a whirlpool. This is what I alluded to awhile ago. We must now submit to that terrible disease called sea-sickness. But let us not surrender to the enemy without making at least some show of resistance. Perhaps our treatment will be the better if we attempt to fight it out, even if we should be taken prisoners. Let the old gentlemen below lay down their arms, and surrender at discretion. I guess they have already been taken captive by the enemy. But it becomes young soldiers like us only to submit to the foe when resistance is no longer possible."

It was in language like this that Agnes Russell, in her more careless moments, was capable of beguiling her own sorrows, and of exhibiting that gayety and lightness of spirits, which she was possessed of, constitutionally, in so eminent a degree. But poor Letitia Stanley was far from being equal to the task, which seemed so remarkably to suit her companion, and for the performance of which she



was urged, as we have seen, to summon all her energies. She groaned mournfully under the sickening nausea that now began to disturb her stomach, and seemed more and more to be giving way to that helpless and desperate languor which is so peculiar to the discouraging attack of sea-sickness. "I cannot, my dear Miss Russell, I cannot proceed any further," was her constant cry. "Do let me escape to my room below, or I shall sink overpowered in the presence of these unfeeling spectators. Oh, believe me, I am sicker now than I ever was before in my life. My sickness is truly painful and cruel."

"Well, well!" replied Agnes, coolly. "I think I am able to sympathize with you, for I believe my own case is becoming quite as bad as yours. And yet, as I said, I am bound to fight it out. But you are completely vanquished, I find, and it becomes my melancholy duty to carry you off the field. There, now, let me lay hold of your helpless body. I must preserve you from the impious triumph of the enemy." So saying, she caught her young friend round the waist, and with a strength and agility that was truly remarkable in a person so delicate and slender, she carried rather than led her down into the cabin.

But in a moment afterward Agnes was again on deck. She seemed bent on adhering strictly to her resolution to fight it out. Her sufferings were no doubt unpleasant and peculiar, but she strove to resist their further violence by inhaling the fresh breeze that now curled the ocean into rude waves, or to forget them in the contemplation of the lofty grandeur by which she was surrounded. "I am fond of looking at this war of the elements," said she to herself. "The winds blow and the waves rise and fall with just sufficient uproar to interest my imagination without exciting my fears. The sails are bent to nearly the utmost of their capacity, and the ropes are as tight as if they were held down by a windlass. How gallantly the noble vessel stems the conflicting forces of these mighty waves! She rides forward like the brave strong man, whose lofty crest is exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storms of life. The billows crowd upon her from every direction; but she appears to exult in her ability to pass safely over them all, and to reach at last some secure port where she will find safety and shelter. Forward! forward! my brave and



gallant ship! Though surrounded by the tempest, there is an unseen hand which is safely guiding you through its distresses and perils."

During this animated soliloquy Agnes stood near the prow of the lofty vessel, and had her eyes steadfastly fixed on the shrouds and canvas that carried her through the deep so rapidly. There can be no doubt that she harbored in her mind an indistinct impression that her own course was not unlike that of the noble ship in which she was sailing. She felt that there were dangers on all sides through which she was compelled to pass, but for the bearing of which she confidently trusted she would be supplied with strength sufficient for every emergency. She thanked God that if she had to contend with the rough surges of the agitated ocean, she had the assurance of being well taken care of, and that she might rest with perfect safety on His arm in the midst of all her sorrows and difficulties.

Fortified with this belief, she found her way slowly to the cabin, where nearly all her fellow-passengers had long ago submitted to the common foe, whom they reluctantly acknowledged to be their rightful conqueror. She surveyed the persons around her with a half-pitiful and half-comical eye. But feeling that she was in no condition to render them assistance, and that her own case required all the attention she was able to bestow on it, she retired to her state-room, and remained there, sometimes awake, and sometimes in dreamy forgetfulness, during the tedious hours of the following night.



## CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning, if there was less noise there was perhaps not less sickness among the passengers. Agnes endeavored to rouse herself from an uneasy slumber, into which, after a restless night, she had fallen from mere exhaustion; but she felt stupid and miserable. She was in that wretched condition that is always the consequence of sleepless pain and anxiety. She raised her head from her pillow, but the little apartment in which she lay appeared to carry her around with the utmost degree of velocity. And yet, after recalling her scattered thoughts, she could not but believe that she felt considerably better than she had done the night before. At that moment the stewardess appeared at her bedside, inquiring if she could render her any assistance.

"None whatever," said Agnes. "You may leave me to my sickness and misery."

"But," rejoined the stewardess, "perhaps the lady would like to have something to eat or something to drink."

"Away! away!" cried Agnes, pettishly. "Do not, I pray you, talk of eating or drinking in my presence."

"I might, for all," said the importunate menial, "make you something that would do you good,—if I could only find out what you wanted."

"I want nothing," replied Agnes again, in a voice that was none of the blindest.

"Something to drink," said her kind visitor, just as she was about to leave the room, with her hand on the latch of the door.

"I repeat again," replied Agnes, with a turn of her head on the pillow, "that I want nothing." But as soon as her head had acquired a new position her eye rested on a small vial standing on the table before her, and from which she had more than once attempted to gain some relief during the previous night. "Stop!" she exclaimed



suddenly to her visitor. "Be good enough to shake the contents of this vial thoroughly, and then let me try what virtue there is in a teaspoonful this morning."

"I thought you wanted something," said the marine domestic, with her eyes uncommonly dilated at the prospect of having her proffered services appreciated. "But I have a cure in my pocket," she continued, "that may help the operation of your own medicine. We always give it to passengers when they are sea-sick, and it is said to be the grandest medicine that can be used either by lady or gentleman."

Agnes gazed for a moment on the person of her officious attendant, who now seemed to be making a tender of her services both as a nurse and a physician. The countenance of the woman indicated honesty and simplicity, in which the sick girl made up her mind at once to confide.

"Your intentions appear to be kind and benevolent," said Agnes, "and I strongly believe you wish to do me good. This medicine you have given to others besides myself?"

"To a great many," said the kind-hearted woman. "To all who are willing to believe that it may do them good; but I never force it on any one."

"Nor shall you force it on me," replied Agnes. "I take it as freely as you offer it. But perhaps it would be better that I should receive it separately from you, and not make it a part of my own remedy."

"That," said her visitor, "I am sure will make no difference. Here, swallow it down. I don't care much how it gets there, only so that it reaches your stomach."

So saying, she let fall a few drops of her own medicine into the spoon, which she had already filled from the vial that stood on the table, and Agnes swallowed it without the least resistance. The servant now withdrew from the apartment, only cautioning her patient not to attempt to rise until she should pay her a second visit.

In a few minutes after her attendant had retired Agnes began to feel decidedly better. Instead of the unpleasant nausea that had caused her so much uneasiness, she experienced a burning sensation at the pit of her stomach, which, though sharp for a time, she found soon afterward to become pleasant and agreeable. A moist glow then



diffused itself over her whole body, and she fell into a profound sleep. How long she remained in this condition she could not tell, but when she waked she was sensible of being another person. Her first idea was to rise at once, and proffer her assistance to those who might not be so fortunate as herself in the means of their recovery. But she remembered that the kind visitor, who had apparently been the instrument of restoring her again to health, had forbidden her to rise until she should have an opportunity of paying another visit to her apartment. She accordingly made no effort to rise, and waited with patience until her expected visitor made her appearance.

"Are you better?" were the first words uttered by the servant as she entered the room. "But I see you are," she continued, without giving Agnes time to reply. "Now you may get up, and I will furnish you with something to eat that will make you feel still better and stronger."

Agnes rose and dressed herself. Her appetite, of course, was not good, but she made out to drink all the liquid that was set on the table, and was able to dispatch the greater part of the contents that filled a plate that was set before her. She found by this time that she was not only relieved from the unpleasant effects of her sickness, but that she was really ten times more light-hearted than she had been since she first entered the vessel. But she was earnestly bent on finding out, in the mean time, how her companions in sickness were bearing their share of the common burden. With this view she tripped across the cabin, and knocked lightly at the door of her young friend, Miss Stanley.

A low sepulchral voice bade her come in. Agnes ran to the couch of the young lady, took her by the hand, and asked her how she did. "Poorly," replied the innocent sufferer. "Oh, Agnes, I am very sick!" Agnes burst into a fit of laughter. "You see," observed Agnes, "that you submitted too easily to the enemy last evening, and now you are annoyed by a thousand disagreeable quirks and pains that are unmercifully pinching and tearing your frame like the cruel pricking of so many fairies."

Letitia uttered not a word in reply. This silence was interrupted by Agnes. "I am going," said she, "to visit your father and Mr. Marshfield. Now be a good girl, and



swallow this tincture, which I took care to provide myself with before I left home. There, now, I hope you will feel better. In a few minutes I will return, and you must be prepared by that time to walk with me, in order that you may render those services to your parent which, in all probability, he feels the want of at present."

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## CHAPTER XX.

AGNES now left the apartment of her friend, in order to inquire, if practicable, into the condition of the young lady's father and Mr. Marshfield. But a difficulty presented itself at the very outset, in consequence of her not being informed of the number and position of the state-room occupied by these two gentlemen. While gazing, however, in a direction where she thought they were most likely to be lodged, her attention was attracted by the appearance of a boy, who seemed to be strolling carelessly in that part of the vessel, from berth to berth, as if he took delight in listening to the expressions of pain and helplessness which, in many instances, so ludicrously saluted his ears as he passed along the remote gangway. The boy's countenance indicated a disposition not wholly exempt from mischief, while at the same time it gave evident tokens of a mind that had, in all probability, felt and thought much more deeply than is consistent with the freedom and unconcern of one so young and apparently so inexperienced. But it betrayed no malevolence, no deceit, and no marks of a reprobate and hardened temper.

"My good boy," said she, "yonder is the room of my friend, Mr. Marshfield, the knowledge of which I have just obtained from other passengers. Now do be kind enough to knock at the door, and say that Miss Russell wishes to see him."

"All right," replied the boy; "yet you see there is some danger too that one of those surly fellows within, who do not choose to be disturbed on account of mere trifles, might



take it into his head to begin to knock in his turn, and then might knock my brains out before I could find an opportunity of explaining my own intentions."

"I hope no one would be so bad as that," answered Agnes, "and I am sure I may safely promise so much for Mr. Marshfield. Besides, if my judgment does not mislead me, I think you are something of a hero, and would willingly perform some good service for a lady, even if you were certain that by doing so you were incurring a slight risk in her behalf."

The boy's eyes sparkled, and casting an approving glance on Agnes, he passionately exclaimed, "Oh, but you remind me of my mother!" Then promptly directing his steps toward the apartment of Mr. Marshfield, he paused in front of it, and gave a gentle rap at the door.

At first no one answered, and Molton Fairview (for that was the name of the boy) was compelled to knock again. He was now made sensible of distinct and piteous moanings from within, which told him, as plainly as moanings could tell, that the ship's cruel malady was doing its work there too. He next proceeded with great caution to open the door. But the moment his eyes caught a glimpse of the interior, he drew back his person with a sudden jerk, and burst into a fit of laughter.

"I tell you," he said, advancing to the spot where Agnes was standing, "they are just as strangely and as comically paired together as ever you saw two persons in your life. They are a couple of strange figures."

"A couple of what?" rejoined Agnes, with some eagerness to ascertain his meaning.

"A couple of gentlemen," answered the boy. "But you never saw such a spectacle. Why, they are sitting together at the same table, moaning and groaning, and staring at each other with dull faces, like children who are looking at the babies in each other's eyes."

"I am sure," said Agnes, "that I do not exactly understand you."

"Well, then," replied the boy, "you may go and look for yourself. I guess it would be just as proper for you to enter as myself. And although I am little concerned about the abuse, or even the blows, they might see fit to shower on me, yet I am fully persuaded that it would not only be



better, but that it would likewise be safer, for you to visit them than it would be for me."

Agnes hesitated no longer about the course she ought to pursue. Advancing in a straight line toward the door of Mr. Marshfield's room, she knocked slightly, and then made a more direct request with her voice to be admitted. This last appeal had its desired effect. "Come in!" was uttered by one of the inmates in a tone of impatience, and with a sign of exhaustion which only too plainly declared the sickness and distress of the sufferer.

The determined girl now entered boldly into the apartment. But the spectacle that met her eyes was more comically distressing, as well as more positively ridiculous, than anything she could have imagined from the hints thrown out by the boy who made the first exploration. The room was characterized by all the misery, with none of the cleanliness, usually found in the cells of a hospital. A small table was drawn to the center, on one side of which sat Mr. Marshfield and on the other Mr. Stanley. But the *tout ensemble* consisted more especially of the respective positions, the haggard countenances, and the strange disordered costumes of these two individuals. A dirty white and green night-cap, composed of some kind of net-work, adorned the crest of Mr. Marshfield, but which was entirely too small for that gentleman's head. His outer garments consisted of a coarse, blue jerkin, with wide corduroy trousers, the former hanging round him as loose as the flowing drapery of a Turk, and the latter answering all the purposes of a marine equipment for a sailor. His neck was muffled as usual by a red silk handkerchief, but adjusted so carelessly about him on the present occasion that he resembled a person who had just been relieved from a fainting fit, and whose bandages had been unfastened in order to afford him a more free opportunity of breathing. He lacked the comfortable appendage of an under vest, and had on his feet a pair of red slippers.

Mr. Stanley was dressed more appropriately, but with scarcely more care or attention. Everything about him appeared to be tumbled and disordered. His hat was deposited at his side, on the floor, and his hair appeared to be as much matted and tangled together as if it had not been combed for a month. His neck-cloth stood awry



about his neck, and the bosom of his shirt was stained, rumpled, and dirty. He looked very much like a man who might have been reveling late over his cups at night, and who had been sleeping off his debauch with his clothes on.

But the singularity of their appearance was rendered the more remarkable on account of their haggard, half-starved, care-worn countenances, and the social attitude they had assumed toward each other. We have already said they were seated on each side of a small table, placed in the center of the room. Mr. Marshfield lay with one side of his face flat to the table, his arms dangling down at the sides until they nearly touched the floor. Mr. Stanley, in a reverse attitude, sustained his head with his hands, supporting the whole weight on his elbows. In this position they seemed to be staring at each other alternately, as if craving or hoping for reciprocal assistance, but without either of them uttering aught but indistinct groans and complaints. The boy, as we have seen, thought they were occupied in looking into each other's eyes.

As soon as Agnes had entered the room of Mr. Marshfield in the manner we have related above, and fully comprehended the situation of the parties she found there, she addressed them in the following language:

"Pardon me, my friends, for this sudden intrusion on your privacy, but I have been diligently inquiring after you for the last two hours, and here I have found you at last."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Marshfield.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mr. Stanley.

"And you are both sick, and both found together."

"Both!" muttered Mr. Marshfield, raising his long arms, and looking languidly up into her face.

"Very sick indeed!" said Mr. Stanley, throwing his head back, and turning up the whites of his eyes, as if they had been disturbed in their sockets by a fit of the nightmare.

"Oh come! come!" cried Agnes. "I myself have been sick, and you see me here as well as ever. It has passed off like a charm. Your daughter Letitia has been as sick as any of us, but I'll venture to say, by taking my ad-



vice she is now as sound as the timbers of this noble ship."

At the mention of his daughter's name, Mr. Stanley fairly rose from the table, drawing his friend, as by magnetic attraction, to his feet with him.

Agnes perceived at once that she had gained an advantage that must not be relinquished. "Come!" she exclaimed, "you shall both go with me. Miss Stanley is waiting for you in her own room, and may run some risk of relapsing into her former miserable sickness unless we all go there to encourage and cheer her."

"Well, then," said Mr. Marshfield, "go to Miss Stanley, continue to encourage and comfort her, and tell her that her father and myself will very shortly come in person to inquire of her welfare."

"Good!" replied Miss Russell. "But you must now keep moving about briskly, otherwise the ugly demon, from whom you have just escaped, may still continue to hold you in his grasp." Having uttered these words, the sprightly girl glided from the apartment, and in a moment afterward was in the room of her friend, Miss Stanley.

As she entered the apartment, and approached her young friend, she saw at once that a change for the better—just such a change as Agnes herself had been planning—had taken place in her appearance. Soon afterward they both had the additional gratification of receiving the anticipated visit of Letitia's father and Mr. Marshfield. Agnes gloried in the effect she had so happily brought about by her energetic skill and management. She had roused her patients from languor and inaction to a confident reliance on their own inherent strength and power of resistance, and having accomplished this purpose, she knew their disease was permanently vanquished, and that a few hours more would see them as healthy and happy as ever.



## CHAPTER XXI.

WE must now return to the adventures of our young friend Harry Courtland. He continued to travel for two days, on his return homeward, without meeting with any incident of sufficient importance to engage his attention. On the third day, however, he reached a public house at noon, where he resolved to stop an hour or two, for the purpose of refreshing himself and his horses. He had not been long at the inn before a four-horse stage drew up to the door, which appeared to be crowded with passengers. When these had alighted, amid a good deal of vulgar slang, that was uttered in no stinted measure, it was found that the passengers, with the exception of two ladies, were men of a very coarse and very reckless appearance. The ladies entered the apartment in which Harry was engaged, before a cheerful fire, in reading a newspaper.

Harry at first felt little interest in the arrival of the two ladies, who, as that was not the house at which the passengers usually dined, he supposed would remain no longer than until the driver had done watering his horses, and would then resume their seats for the further progress of their journey. But his attention was soon attracted by hearing the elder lady, in a voice, however, which she evidently did not intend for his own ear, address her companion in the following language :

"I cannot, my dear, endure the rudeness of these vulgar people any longer. I am not afraid of them, but I certainly feel highly disgusted with their conduct and behavior. I am sure that you too must labor under the same kind of feelings. Do you not think it would be better for us to remain here until the next stage passes, when, in all probability, we shall meet with better company at least, if not with a better stage and a more careful driver?"

"I have nothing to oppose to your wishes, mother," replied the younger traveler. "These men are certainly rude and uncivil, and the stage is anything but comfortable. I



should suppose we will meet with reasonably good entertainment at this house, and, as we are both somewhat fatigued, we shall feel all the better for resting until to-morrow."

"Driver!" cried the elder lady, who now advanced to the door, in front of which the stage was standing, "be good enough to have our baggage delivered to the landlord in the bar-room. It is not our intention to go any farther to-day."

The driver did not attempt to inquire into the reason of this determination on the part of the lady, his own conjectures, no doubt, readily leading him to a knowledge of its true cause. The landlord bustled about to see that the instructions given to the driver were complied with; the luggage was taken down from the stage, and the ladies retired to another apartment in order to prepare for dinner.

Harry saw nothing more of the two ladies until nearly the hour of dining; but having laid aside their traveling dresses, and disrobed themselves of much of that superfluous drapery which had previously served to conceal as well as to protect their persons, he was now very favorably struck with their carriage and appearance. The elder lady, who looked as if she might be fifty years of age, possessed a countenance of superior dignity, and still retained in her face much of that bloom and freshness which belongs more exclusively to females of early youth and expanding beauty. Her companion, who was her daughter, might have been fast verging on twenty; but, although so much younger, appeared less delicately and symmetrically formed than her mother, and scarcely exhibited the same amount of color in her cheeks. But she manifested the same graceful dignity in her movements, and the same mild good sense in the expression of her countenance, and in the remarkably soft luster of her eyes. In one particular, however, the appearance of her face differed very much from that of her mother. The looks of the latter, when not engaged in conversation, would sometimes betray a feeling within that was not only grave, but melancholy. Those of the former, on the contrary, were uniformly lit up with a light that was cheerful, and not unfrequently gay and frolicsome.

The three guests were entertained together at the same



table, apart from the members composing the landlord's family.

"I think, my dear Virginia," said the mother to her daughter, "we have but fifty miles yet to travel in order fully to complete our journey. It may be that we shall arrive at Ashford by to-morrow at noon." As soon as the lady had pronounced the word Ashford, Harry raised his eyes, and looked her directly in the face. "If we could but get word to our friend," she continued, "in all probability she would contrive to send some kind of conveyance for us by which we might reach our old home without putting ourselves to much further inconvenience."

Again Harry's eyes met those of the lady's, his face became flushed, and he evidently felt a lively interest in the words that dropped from her lips. This the lady seemed now to perceive, and fixing her look on him with an earnestness which was scarcely less than that of his own, after some hesitation she was induced to inquire whether he resided in that neighborhood, or whether his home was in some other part of the State.

"I live in — County," he replied, "not far from a farm which is known by the name of Ashford, a name which I was somewhat surprised to hear you mention only a few minutes ago."

"And your name?" inquired the lady, eagerly.

"My name," said Harry, rising at the same moment from his chair, as if roused by a confused and sudden recollection, and extending his hand instinctively to the lady, "is Harry Courtland."

"Good Heavens!" cried the astonished female, "do I, indeed, see the son of my old friend here before me? Is it possible that this is Harry Courtland, the boy who, ten years ago, used to fetch me butter and cream from his mother's dairy? Do you recognize him, my child?" she continued, turning round, and addressing her daughter.

"I felt as if I knew him half an hour ago," answered the younger female, "but the feeling was like a dream, so faint and indistinct that I was at a loss to know how to account for it."

"And I," said Harry, shaking her warmly by the hand, "was affected a good deal in the same way, experiencing



sensations in my mind as if I were suddenly realizing long-forgotten associations, yet regarding the whole as a passing vision that had no real existence."

The three friends were now earnest in their hearty recognition of each other, and overjoyed at the apparent accident which had thus brought them together.

It becomes necessary here that we should inform our readers of a few particulars concerning the two travelers with whom we have just made them acquainted. The name of these ladies was Truehope. The mother, at an early day, had married an English gentleman who possessed a small landed estate in the neighborhood of Courtland Hall, which he called Ashford, but which he did not live many years to enjoy. He died young, and left Mrs. Truehope a widow with two daughters, the eldest of whom, named Clara, was considerably older than her sister. It was not long after her father's death that Clara was married to a young Englishman, who had for several years been intimate in the family of her parents, but who was never a favorite of Mrs. Truehope. After this marriage, being proud and high-spirited, and feeling that she had given offense to her mother, whom she loved with true affection, and who as tenderly loved her in return, Clara removed with her husband to the City of New York. He succeeded in establishing himself in business in this great commercial metropolis, but a monetary crisis soon after ensued, and the poor man, with thousands of others who, like himself, had commenced the world without capital, was ultimately obliged to confide the settlement of his affairs to the mercy of his creditors. At first Clara had carried on an uninterrupted correspondence with her mother, but as the affairs of her husband darkened, and the prospect before her became more and more gloomy, her hopes forsook her, and she was too high-minded to communicate to her, whom she imagined she had already sufficiently grieved, a history of her sufferings and misfortunes. The consequence was that all correspondence, on the part of Clara, entirely ceased, and her mother, after many months of suspense and conjecture, became wholly ignorant of even the neighborhood in which her daughter resided. All that she knew about her was that she had one son, an interesting child, who in many respects resembled his



mother,—but she was kept totally ignorant of what had become of him or his parents.

This state of things had continued so long that Mrs. Truehope was at last induced to visit the City of New York in person, accompanied by her younger daughter, who was now about twelve years of age, for the purpose of ascertaining, if possible, the exact truth in relation to the fortune and circumstances of her elder child. But all her inquiries turned out to be vain and fruitless. At last she was told that a gentleman, answering the description of her son-in-law, with his wife and one child, had, some three or four years previously, left New York for England, and had not been heard of again since that period. Mrs. Truehope was a woman of great energy of character, and of remarkable steadfastness in the pursuit of any object calculated to call forth her courage and resolution. She resolved, therefore, at once to cross over to England in search of her banished daughter. She had committed the management of her estate at Ashford to a trusty agent, who was to correspond with her as she might from time to time direct, and she had furnished herself with a sufficient sum of money to defray her own expenses and those of the child who accompanied her. She felt confident, besides, that on reaching England she would be kindly greeted by the friends of her lately deceased husband, and that she and her daughter might spend some time among them without being exposed to any outlay sufficiently weighty to diminish seriously the contents of her own purse.

When she arrived in England all the inquiries she was able to make, and which others kindly made for her, ended as fruitlessly as they had done in the City of New York. No such person as her daughter and son-in-law could be found—no traces could be discovered of them in any direction—and it was doubtful to most of her acquaintances whether any such persons had ever visited England. Mrs. Truehope was disappointed, but had no reason to regret the voyage she had made across the ocean. The friends of her late husband, whose memory they cherished with warm and respectful affection, treated her and her daughter with the utmost degree of tenderness and regard. They sympathized with them in all their sorrows, listened to all their little wants, and invariably respected them as mem-



bers of their own families. So well pleased was Mrs. Truehope with the treatment she received from her foreign kinsfolk, that she was prevailed on at last to make her permanent home among them; and it was only now, after an absence of nearly ten years, that she and her daughter were retracing their steps back again to their home in the State of New York, which was endeared to them by a thousand tender recollections, and where they hoped in time to lie down and rest from their worldly cares and sorrows. Such is a brief history of the two travelers who became so surprisingly associated with Harry Courtland at the inn on the roadside.

It will be readily presumed that our three friends were not long in coming to an understanding about the manner in which, for the rest of their journey, they were to travel together to Courtland Hall. Harry, of course, invited Mrs. Truehope and her daughter to take seats with him in his carriage, which afforded ample accommodations for themselves as well as their baggage, and which invitation they readily and thankfully accepted. It was agreed, however, that they would not resume their journey until next morning.

While thus resting and conversing at the inn, Mrs. Truehope and her daughter had, of course, many questions to put to Harry—many inquiries to make in regard to by-gone events—which he took great pleasure in answering, so far as it was in his power. But the principal part of their discourse had reference to Agnes Russell.

“Ah, that charming girl!” exclaimed Mrs. Truehope, with an enthusiasm which seemed to give inspiration to every word she uttered, “I remember her as well as if she were now standing directly in my presence. It was not that I loved her for her beauty, or for her intelligence, or for the rare accomplishments which a sainted mother had conferred on her person,—although these were sufficiently marked and strong to attract the attention of the most careless observer, especially when her extreme youth was taken into consideration. But it was the simplicity, and at the same time the shrewdness of her understanding, the playfulness of her humor, the stateliness and dignity of her deportment,—but above all, her constant endeavor to make herself useful to all around her, without



the least consciousness of superior merit on her part, that I so much admired. Pardon me, Mr. Courtland! but indeed, indeed, she seemed to me more like an angel than a being like ourselves. And now this dear creature has in reality undertaken the mission of an angel. God speed her on her sainted errand, for I certainly have reason to believe that he, for whom she has so heroically undertaken it, is worthy!" Mrs. Truehope spoke with so much earnestness, and so deeply felt the truth of what she uttered, that she found it necessary for a moment to turn away her face, in order to conceal the warm tears by which it was moistened.

"I do not remember very much of Miss Agnes," said her daughter, after a considerable pause, "only that I have a distinct recollection of the respect and obedience she paid to her mother, and the anxiety she often showed that I too should never forget the debt I owed to my parents. I remember, too, how fond she was of looking at the hills and mountains, and how often she would sit musing at the side of some murmuring stream, or would climb to the summit of some steep rock, while I was left to my own free choice of gathering wild flowers and wreathing my head with garlands. But she was always sure to join me in my sports at last, and would sometimes apologize for the neglect with which she was afraid I would think I had been treated."

It was thus the hours passed away on the afternoon of this sudden and remarkable reunion, each of the parties communicating and receiving from the others the recollections of old impressions, and the narration of events that had almost entirely faded from their memories. It was now drawing towards the month of December, and late in the afternoon, when the subjects discussed had become pretty well exhausted, Virginia Truehope was observed by Harry to be busy in collecting some faded plants and flowers which still preserved a languid existence in the little garden attached to the inn at which they had made their temporary sojourn. "Virginia has become an enthusiastic botanist," said her mother, "but you will learn more of her humor in this way after you shall grow better acquainted with her."

The next morning they breakfasted early, and were soon



on the road leading to the neighborhood they were all anxious to reach. But a considerable part of their journey remained yet to be accomplished. It was not until towards sunset of the following day that they came in sight of Courtland Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Courtland were standing under the portico, in front of the building, Rowland being employed in repairing and cleaning up the walks extending from the house to the main road.

"This little hedge-row," said Rowland, "was planted and nursed by our poor Percy, and blow me if I don't think it looks a good deal the worse since he left home, just as if it knew that no person could take so good care of it as himself. It is turning pale and unhealthy, as may be the case with the poor boy who has gone to seek his fortune so far away from home. This is a most uncertain and changeable world. To-day every object around us may be as bright as a burnished plowshare, and to-morrow they may be like that same plowshare stuck deep into a stubborn furrow, and rusting just for want of some one to lift it out of the dirt. This world we live in, I tell you, is a very changeable world."

The aged couple standing under the portico, to whom these remarks were addressed, could not listen to them without deep feeling and concern. They were replied to, however, but very briefly, Mr. Courtland merely observing, "The world indeed is changeable, Rowland, but our hopes, if possible, should always remain the same."

"You are right," answered Rowland, "for if we gave up our hopes we should forget Percy altogether." Then happening to elevate his eyes in a direction towards the great public road leading past the farm, he exclaimed in the next instant, "But see! there comes Harry. Yes, that is Harry! But blow me," he continued, as the carriage drew nearer, and he had a more distinct view of its approaching passengers, "if there is not Agnes Russell and our own courageous Maggy coming back again."

Mr. and Mrs. Courtland were strongly disposed to coincide with Rowland in opinion. They were at a loss to account for the appearance of the two females, and were fearful that some accident had taken place on the road, that made it necessary for them to return again to their respective homes. But the carriage now stopped in front



of the entrance that led up to the house, and Rowland was at the gate to welcome Harry after his long journey, and to offer his services in taking care of the horses while Harry assisted the ladies to alight.

"The two females," said Mrs. Courtland, "can certainly be none other than Agnes and Maggy. And yet," she continued after a moment's pause, "their persons do not seem to me to be exactly the same either."

"I would think they were the same," observed Mr. Courtland, "only that Rowland appears to greet them in a manner not entirely consistent with the deportment he would in all probability observe towards Maggy."

"I can see them plainer now," said Mrs. Courtland, "and I am convinced that our visitors are not the persons we at first supposed they were."

"But who can they be?" asked Mr. Courtland.

"We shall soon learn that now," returned his companion, "for they are coming forward, and are already inside of the gate."

Harry stepped between the two ladies, and each of them embraced the opportunity of taking his arm. When he arrived at the portico, as soon as he had saluted his parents, he presented his friends, but without mentioning their names. This had been previously arranged, for the purpose of ascertaining how far they would be recognized by his father and mother. Mr. Courtland at first looked somewhat confused—stared at Virginia—smiled at Mrs. Truehope—but said nothing. Mrs. Courtland silently conducted the ladies into the parlor, invited them to be seated, and deliberately fixed her eyes first on one and then on the other. Virginia looked awkward and abashed, and her mother was about to speak, when Mrs. Courtland, as if awakened at once to a sense of some wonderful reality, sprang suddenly forward, seized her round the neck, and bathed the face of her visitor with tears and kisses. "It is, it is," she exclaimed, "my old friend, Mrs. Truehope. I had long given you up for lost. How is it that you appear before us so wondrously, and under circumstances I am so little able to understand?"

We will not trouble our readers with any further particulars of this memorable meeting. Mr. Courtland, of course, greeted his old friend with a warmth equally



strong and enthusiastic with that of his partner, protesting, however, what was certainly true, that he had a faint recollection of her all the while. A full explanation was gone into in relation to the prolonged absence of mother and daughter. Virginia, who continued unrecognized on account of the great change that had necessarily taken place in her person, was presented with all due formality, and the fortunate meeting at the inn between Harry and the two ladies was rehearsed with feelings of the most profound satisfaction on both sides.

In a few days Mrs. Truehope and her daughter became completely domesticated in the family of Mr. Courtland. We have already mentioned that their farm at Ashford had been leased out to a tenant, and, until their return, had been under the management of a trusty agent, who had discharged his duties with probity and skill highly complimentary to his character. But Mrs. Truehope now determined, from considerations of economy, that the farm in future should be placed under her own exclusive and personal attention. In the mean time she received a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Courtland to make their house a home for herself and daughter, until the lease of the tenant who occupied the land should expire, or until they should make some other arrangement that would accord better with their wishes. This invitation was kindly and thankfully accepted. One of the most pleasant rooms in the house was assigned for their sole and separate use; and, being fitted up in a style that suited them, they found themselves again sharing a hospitality that was the more pleasing because they knew it was perfectly unconstrained and voluntary.



## CHAPTER XXII.

It was the very next day after the occurrences we have undertaken to narrate above, that a gentleman of respectable appearance was seen to ride deliberately up to the large gate fronting Courtland Hall, and, after alighting from his horse, enter the inclosure and walk up the beautiful avenue that led to the main entrance of the building. This gentleman had in his youth resided in the neighborhood which he was now induced again to visit from attachments that the long lapse of years could not effectually displace from his memory. In early life, like thousands of men in our country who have distinguished themselves as her best citizens and most successful benefactors, he had removed to a portion of our western territory, for the purpose of pushing his fortune there, and entering on a sphere of greater activity and more extensive usefulness. The measure of his prosperity in this new region was fully equal to his hopes and expectations. By a gradual elevation from comparative obscurity, he rose to occupy several offices of the highest distinction and responsibility in the State, until at last he was placed at the very head of authority, and was called by the people to the honorable post of filling the gubernatorial chair. He was not personally known to Mr. Courtland, but the recollection of his youth and enterprise continued to be fresh and unfading in the minds of many of his old neighbors, and he was universally respected by all of them as a truly dignified, intelligent, and estimable man. The ex-governor rode that morning to the residence of Mr. Courtland alone. Although he had figured much in public life, he was still in the enjoyment of a vigorous manhood, undisturbed by age and unimpaired by sickness or infirmity. Mr. Courtland was seated in a neat apartment, fitted up for the purposes of a small but select library, when his guest arrived, and happening to spy his approach through the window, he went immediately to the door to receive him. His



visitor, whom we shall designate by the name of Cartwright, was politely invited by Mr. Courtland to enter the house, and was conducted by him to a seat in the little library.

"You must pardon me, Mr. Courtland," said the ex-governor, as soon as he had thrown off a very plain overcoat, and found himself seated at a comfortable fire,—“you must pardon me for this intrusion, which in no case would hardly be justifiable except as between ourselves. You know me by reputation, perhaps, as I am happy to say I have in the same way lately become acquainted with you. My name is Cartwright, and I am now on a visit to this neighborhood with scarcely any other object in view than to unbend my mind by reviving old recollections, and to restore again the half-forgotten impressions that once so powerfully interested my childhood and youth. But it occurred to me a day or two ago that an object like this, the pursuit of which is usually attended with a good deal of leisure and idleness, might be made in addition to yield some practical instruction. You, sir, have the reputation of being a skillful and successful farmer. I myself feel a very deep interest in everything that relates to agriculture. I think you will now understand the purport of my visit. I have taken the liberty to call on you with as little ceremony as I would on one of my own neighbors living in the far West, and my whole object is to talk to you a little on the subject of practical farming.”

Mr. Courtland acknowledged the high honor done him by a call from so distinguished a visitor, and especially for a purpose which seemed to imply the acknowledgment of his own skill as an agriculturist. He immediately gave his visitor the assurance of a warm welcome, ordered his horse to be put up, and declared how happy he would be if his humble attainments could in the least degree contribute either to his pleasure or instruction.

"You are said to be one of the best farmers in this neighborhood," said the ex-governor. "I myself am extensively engaged in the same business, and would esteem it a great benefit could I carry home with me some new ideas on this important subject."

"Perhaps, after all," replied Mr. Courtland, "the success of farming, like all other pursuits, must depend on



the attachment and taste we cherish for it. What we love most we necessarily follow with the most ardor, and it will be found in nearly every instance that we shall prosecute it with the most success. Every kind of knowledge is easy to the man who is fond of its study."

"Just so," said the ex-governor, "and for that very reason, if I am not wrongly informed, you are calculated to be one of the best instructors in the world. We, indeed, who look to you for instruction, may not yet have been able to form our tastes after a standard like your own; but a few lessons, properly delivered and inculcated, may inspire us with a love and enthusiasm scarcely inferior to that which belongs to yourself. Like all other men who excel in some particular calling or profession, I presume you have adopted a few leading principles, the use of which you find to work so admirably, and the knowledge of which it is so easy for you to communicate to others."

"You are right," rejoined Mr. Courtland. "And as much of our knowledge is acquired from the study and application of analogous subjects, one of the most useful principles in agriculture may be learned in the first instance from the study of the human mind. For example, there is an important truth in relation to the mind taught in the Bible, and perhaps by philosophers too (but of that I am not so certain), that we must cease to do evil before we can learn to do well,—in other words, as I understand it, we must eject from our minds all those adverse affections and thoughts which are opposed to true order, before we can expect to live according to the laws which true order prescribes. This is the first step to be taken by a man who wishes to become sincerely intelligent and wise. And precisely the same course must be pursued by the farmer, whose object is to change the condition and capability of his soil. He must first prepare it for orderly cultivation before he can expect to make it productive. He must begin by removing the stones, by destroying its hardness and tenacity, by draining it of its impurities and excesses, and must use every mechanical contrivance within his power to bring it to a condition of smoothness and mellowness. He may afterward inquire what it lacks, and may infuse into it, by artificial means, some properties which are known to be useful as important helps to the



growth and fruitfulness of plants. Having taken these preliminary steps, there will be little to trouble him subsequently, when he comes to sow his seed, and he may confidently calculate on good crops and abundant harvests."

"It would seem, then," answered Governor Cartwright, "that your chief dependence is on making a good beginning."

"Precisely so," said Mr. Courtland, "for that is the secret of success in almost everything. A well-behaved, industrious, and attentive boy will make a virtuous, useful, and respectable man. A thrifty and well-conditioned young steer will make a large and profitable ox. A luxuriant growth of shoots from the seed will be apt to produce the best crop of wheat. So the best prepared field will nourish the greatest amount of productive vegetation."

"These rules are simple, and perhaps they are correct," rejoined Mr. Cartwright. "But there is surely much to do on a farm after the commencement has been prosperously made. The very fact of success at first may be the means of disappointment afterward."

"That the farmer always has much to do," replied Mr. Courtland, "there can be no doubt. But to the thrifty farmer the much he has to do will be a pleasure, whereas to one that is indolent and careless it will always be attended with failure and difficulty. Every one knows how easy it is to keep their books in order when once they are properly arranged and secured on their shelves and their cases; but throw them again into disorder, and it requires tedious hours and days to restore them to their first condition. And as to failing on account of the great measure of our success, that could scarcely happen with a farmer who is intelligent and industrious, and it is only the intelligent and industrious who will take the first steps to improve their farms in the manner I have stated."

"But do you not avail yourself of the recent improvements made in so many implements of husbandry, and of the innumerable new modes of enriching and fertilizing the soil?"

"Just so far as I believe these to be necessary, but no farther. The farmer has a very important duty to discharge to himself, and that is to rely with reasonable con-



fidence on his own judgment and experience, without suffering himself to be led away and deceived by men who, in proclaiming their new discoveries and improvements to the world, have necessarily a selfish end to accomplish, which is almost always sure to lead them far into the uncertainty of conjectural experiment. Much as we are indebted to the improvement of machinery, and the new discoveries of fertilizing agents on the one hand, we are not unfrequently exposed to the empirical designs of interested projectors on the other. Besides, the science of agriculture, like almost all the other sciences, is too often encumbered with a weight of technical refinement and redundancy, which only renders its study the more obscure and discouraging. Its greatest reliance and security, as is the case with all matters of vital importance to the human family, is its obvious simplicity. This the farmer will best learn from the school of his own experience."

"But surely," said Mr. Cartwright, "you would not have him neglect the experience of other men."

"Not where he has reason to believe it is well founded," replied Mr. Courtland. "So far from this, I would have the whole farming community regarded as one family, and to impart the results of their experience to each other for the common welfare. In the mean time the old methods of culture should not be lightly departed from. Instead of eagerly inquiring after new improvements, however valuable some of these may be when once fairly established, it would be better, perhaps, to prosecute these old methods with a new vigor, energy, and perseverance. The true inquiry after all should be not so much in regard to what new methods of cultivation are to be used, as how to use the old ones as well as the new with the most regularity and effect—at their proper times and in their proper order."

We have endeavored to preserve the substance of the conversation that passed between Governor Cartwright and Mr. Courtland on the occasion in question. The discussion of several important agricultural subjects was protracted to a much greater length than we have here stated, and each of them felt highly edified and instructed by the remarks so freely and frankly thrown out by his companion. At length they separated from each other



with expressions of esteem and regard, which were mutually sincere and ardent, and which they had every reason to believe would be long remembered and cherished on both sides.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

GOVERNOR CARTWRIGHT had scarcely withdrawn from this friendly and instructive interview, when Mr. Courtland received a visit from his neighbor Thomas Russell. Notice had been given to that gentleman that Harry had returned from his trip, made in company with his daughter, to New York, and we may easily imagine how anxious he was to be informed of the result of their journey to the city from which she was to embark for California.

Mr. Russell was led by his friend into the little library from which Governor Cartwright had just taken his departure. In a moment afterwards Mrs. Truehope and her daughter entered. The former he recognized as his old neighbor, with whom he had spent many happy hours in years that had long since passed away. Their meeting, on this occasion, was enthusiastic and tender in a very high degree. Each one seemed to enter into the other's feelings with a warmth that was mutually understood and reciprocated, and which called up the trying events and vicissitudes of their past lives. They thought on other days, when their joys were greater, and their hopes were brighter,—when the sunshine of prosperity gathered light from the past, and with its glorious promises dazzled the future. They remembered the clouds that afterwards overshadowed the brilliant prospect before them, and surrounded them with gloom and darkness. No wonder that now, although they had been trained in the school of adversity, and had learned to exercise fortitude and patience there, they wept like children in each other's presence, and gave vent to feelings that were sad, but not hopelessly sorrowful. The sudden shock operated like the electric fluid—it agitated their frames at first, but it settled down in a moment afterward into peace and tranquillity.



It is unnecessary that we should attempt to say more on a subject so tender and pathetic. Of Virginia Truehope Mr. Russell retained no recollection, and it required that she should be introduced to him as an entire stranger. When this task had been performed, he seemed the more anxious to make inquiries about his own daughter. For this purpose Harry was sent for, who was eagerly, and not very regularly, interrogated on the subject.

“You say that all was right, Harry, when she entered on board the ship. She met with nothing, I apprehend, to occasion her the least uneasiness. Agnes is possessed of a great deal of fortitude. She is not easily frightened, and is never disturbed by fears that are only imaginary. I tell you, Harry, she will get along very well, even among strangers, for whatever difficulties she may meet, she will consider them as coolly, and judge of them as correctly, as if she were laying off a flower-bed in the garden. She possesses no little share of the courage which once animated the bosom of her mother, and of the admirable resources which served her so well when surrounded by danger. And yet, poor girl, she may have a great deal to encounter—a great deal more than ever exercised the patience of her mother—a far sorer trial (and God knows the trial has been sore enough) than ever probed the feelings of her unhappy father.”

To all this Harry returned a broad and general answer. He said that, so far as he had an opportunity of judging from her external deportment, he had every reason to believe that when he left her, Agnes was in the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity of mind. She complained of nothing, and seemed to fear nothing. All her concern was on account of her friends—on account of those in whose welfare she seemed to feel a much deeper interest than in her own.

“You have reason to be proud of such a daughter,” said Mr. Courtland, addressing himself to his friend, Mr. Russell. “Let us endeavor to profit by her example, and to imitate that fortitude and resignation to the divine will, which enables her to meet her trials so bravely. She is engaged in the discharge of a noble duty, for the accomplishment of which I have no doubt she has summoned all her energies. We, too, have duties to perform, which it



behooves us to attend to with the same kind of earnestness and attention. If we suffer our minds to grow languid in the struggle—if our spirits should fail us, and our strength and courage give way under difficulties—then it is impossible that we should succeed in performing the labor that has been assigned us; and although our task may not embrace the achievement of a specific object like hers—although it may not partake of so holy a character—it at least involves the accomplishment of some general good, which all have it in their power to bring about to a greater or less extent.”

“I think I understand your father,” said Mr. Russell, speaking to Harry. “His meaning is, that each one of us should aim at the accomplishment of all the good that is in our power, and that this task will be best performed by attending diligently to our ordinary duties.”

“You have understood my meaning exactly,” rejoined Mr. Courtland, “and I hope none of you will undertake to dispute the soundness of a position that is so plain and simple. Our constant aim in this world ought to be to make ourselves useful. And now, Harry, let me hear how you intend to appropriate your time during the ensuing winter, and what projects you have in view in order to render yourself useful to your neighbors.”

“I have much to do to promote my own individual improvement,” said Harry, “and feel the necessity of continuing some time yet to be a learner before I attempt to become a teacher.”

“That is very well spoken, my son,” answered Mr. Courtland, “and yet I would feel loath that your modesty should obstruct the exercise of your usefulness. It does not necessarily happen that because we are engaged in acquiring knowledge for ourselves, we are therefore prevented from imparting it to others, any more than because we are engaged in accumulating riches, we are debarred from using our wealth as a means of promoting individual and social happiness. In both these cases, perhaps, it will be found that a liberal bestowment of our acquisitions on others only tends to increase and extend our own individual stores. Certain it is, that there is no surer way of acquiring knowledge than by engaging in the task of teaching it



to those around us. What we attempt to impart to others always becomes plainer to ourselves."

"But I am afraid," answered Harry, "that I should find it difficult to procure a sufficient number of earnest and attentive pupils."

"Nothing easier in the world," exclaimed Mr. Courtland. "Only convince one or two of your neighbors of the benefits to be derived from associating with you in the pursuit of certain branches of knowledge, and a strong inclination would soon be felt by others to move in the same sphere. Begin, for instance, with an agricultural society. Form a class from the members of that society to meet once a week at some convenient place, for the purpose of mutually instructing each other on subjects in which all profess to feel equal interest. Think how easy it would be for you to suggest several new ideas on the subject of the compost-heap; how much you could say in regard to the many benefits to be derived from draining; how well you could speak about deep, timely and judicious plowing; how readily you could expatiate on the successful culture of fruit trees; how eloquent you could become on the proper care and improvement of stock on a farm; but, above all, with what energy and warmth you could enforce the propriety of observing strict order and regularity in the discharge of every duty pertaining to the thrifty husbandman, his neatness, his economy, his watchfulness, his particularity, his promptness, and a thousand other virtues equally excellent and equally necessary. These subjects would form themes on which you might, with great reason, expend much of your zeal and enthusiasm. Try it, my boy, try it! Try it for your own sake; for the experiment, if I am not much mistaken, will benefit no one half so much as it will yourself."

Harry scarcely moved a muscle of his face after his father had done speaking, but seemed to be absorbed in deep thought. This was noticed by Virginia Truehope, who was by no means an unconcerned listener to that which had just been uttered in her presence. She looked wistfully on Harry, as if she expected to see him rise from his seat, animated by the same warm enthusiasm which had just characterized the discourse of his father. She



seemed to feel a portion of that enthusiasm in her own bosom. But Harry remained mute, as if utterly at a loss to know how to respond to the appeal which had been made to him with so much force and feeling. At length, Virginia, either to break the awkward silence that prevailed, or moved by the warmth which Mr. Courtland's address seemed to impart to her own bosom, ventured to hold forth in the following language :

"Why, Harry! I am almost ready to second, although I feel with how much weakness and indecision, the strong language made use of by your father. What a noble, what a delightful picture he placed before us! I should be proud to become one of the characters in that picture myself. I feel as if it would be a distinguished honor even to be placed in the background. I never before felt what a blessed privilege it is to be permitted to mingle in the business affairs of this mighty world."

"And certainly, Miss Truehope," said Harry, "you have just as much right to take an earnest part in the affairs of the world as those who may regard themselves as actors of more importance. You too have a part to perform which you ought not to think is altogether a subordinate one, and which may inculcate a truth or point a moral with as much success as if you had it in your power to personify a more prominent character. What say you now, to establishing a class for the very purpose of teaching your favorite science, botany? Surely nothing could be better contrived, or more accommodated to the habits and tastes of persons living in the country!"

"Alas!" cried Virginia, "the bare mention of a branch of knowledge like that is enough of itself to dampen the ardor which I just now so warmly felt in the cause of human improvement. Botany! why, it is a science which is neglected and spurned by the fashionable and intelligent everywhere,—by people of all classes in the old world and in the new,—how much more by minds whose tastes have never been cultivated, and whose perceptions have but glanced at the rudiments of any science?"

"And yet botany, if properly taught," observed Mr. Courtland, "might perhaps be as freely and as easily communicated to simple minds as acquisitions belonging to any other department of knowledge. But I must confess



there are technical difficulties in the way which seem to be almost insurmountable."

"I believe I understand you," said Mr. Russell. "You are thinking of the words calyx, corolla, petals, etc., of monocotyledons, and I don't know how many other hard words, of which I presume Miss Virginia alone, of all the company here, could attempt to give us anything like a rational explanation."

"There !" cried Harry, suddenly breaking the silence into which he seemed purposely to have fallen, in order to give the rest of the company an opportunity to express their opinions,—“there now you have it, Miss Virginia. Your darling science, as I have said, is but a jargon of strangely classified names, just about as hard to impress on the memory as they are to pronounce with the lips. And yet the subject to which they refer is one of the most beautiful and interesting in the world."

"I am glad," said Miss Truehope, "to hear you say so; and in gratitude to the subject which you profess so much to admire, I only hope that hereafter instead of applying to me such appellations as pistil, pedunculus, stigma, and other names which you may consider equally barbarous, you will address me in the plain language of flowers, and call me rose, lily, or tulip."

"Let that be agreed upon then," observed Harry, "but only on this condition. When we have formed our classes for instruction, instead of producing a volume of Linnæus as a text-book for your pupils, I insist on it that you bring with you your ordinary portfolio, in which you have compressed with your own hands the shapes and colors of a thousand beautiful plants, and have designated them by names which may be understood by the feeblest capacity."

"It is a covenant and agreement solemnly entered into," said Miss Truehope. "You are to set up for an instructor in the principles and practice of agriculture, and I am to give lessons on the economical government of a family, with here and there a little botany, just for the sake of ornament. This then is the plan of our campaign, which, although it is to be carried on in the season of winter, I trust will receive our earnest and most devoted attention."

When Mr. Courtland rose to leave the library, his at-



tention was arrested by seeing Rowland leading two of his saddle horses across the yard, and hitching them to a post that was planted on a convenient spot for that purpose. On inquiring of Rowland for whose service these animals were brought out, he immediately replied that they were intended for the use of Miss Truehope and Harry. "They are about to take a ride round the country," he remarked, "and blow me if I don't think it is one of the very best things they could do."

"You are right, Rowland! perfectly right," exclaimed Mr. Courtland. "And here is another benefit accruing from the habits of a country life. The art of horsemanship is peculiarly rustic, and yet is the most graceful and dignified exercise in which we have an opportunity to indulge. It is ten times more healthy than dancing, and a thousand times more noble. It is a pursuit in which the greatest men and women of the world have found a decided pleasure. There is no effeminacy about it—nothing that relaxes the strength either of mind or body. On the contrary, it forms the truest perfection of a manly indulgence, and derives its chief advantages from the sublime elevation which it gives to our thoughts and feelings."

"Thank you, Mr. Courtland," exclaimed Virginia, as she passed him on her way to procure a suitable riding-dress. "I am sure we shall not relish the exercise we are about to take the less on account of the merited praise you are pleased to bestow on the noble art of horsemanship."



## CHAPTER XXIV.

WE must now resume the thread of our story from the point at which we broke off, when detailing the recovery of Agnes Russell and her companions, on board the vessel in which they were sailing, from sea-sickness. In a few days they found themselves completely restored to their former health and spirits, and indeed were made fully sensible that the nauseating effects of their sickness had turned out to be a real benefit.

About two weeks had now elapsed since our adventurers on the ocean had left the City of New York. Mr. Marshfield and Mr. Stanley resorted to many methods of filling up the leisure time which was at their disposal, and they always aimed at making it yield them profit as well as pleasure. They spent many hours of course in reading, and in conversing on a great variety of topics with the other passengers. But they were more exclusively engaged in reciprocating feelings and exchanging ideas with each other. They shared between them a congeniality of sentiment and character which always rendered their intercourse not only beneficial but pleasant, harmonious, and cheerful.

It was on one of these occasions that they had met together, in the saloon of the steamer. Agnes sat opposite to the two friends, who were engaged in earnest conversation with each other, and Maggy was seated at her side. Mr. Marshfield had just repeated to Mr. Stanley the pleasure he now took in considering the nature of the soul, and the assurance he had of its immortality.

"I must confess," said he, "that until lately this subject appeared to me very dark and mysterious, but since conversing with Miss Russell and yourself, a thousand strong reasons elevate my hopes and confirm my faith. But it will not do to discuss this matter any further. It is now late, and most of our fellow-passengers have retired to rest. It becomes us to follow their example."



The night was dark, but it was silent as the calm that precedes the earthquake. Not a ripple was heard to disturb the quiet repose of the waters, and yet the noble ship plowed her way through the mighty deep as if animated by a life that was strong, active, and majestic. The moment, however, that Mr. Marshfield uttered the words we have recorded above, a tremendous blow struck the bow of the vessel, and sent her reeling back from her course, as if she had been lifted bodily out of the water. An alarm was given by some person at the other end of the ship that she had sprung a leak, and was fast taking in water. Mr. Marshfield was now the very first to rush forward toward the stairs leading up the deck, and to desert his companions without a single word of apology or explanation. In a short time it was found that the vessel indeed had sustained some harm, but not sufficient to render her case either desperate or dangerous. It required but a small amount of labor at the pumps to free her entirely from water, and scarcely more labor in effectually stopping the leaks which had been discovered.

The absence of Mr. Marshfield from the cabin occasioned Agnes to feel much concern on his account, and that concern was not a little increased when, after the lapse of a much greater length of time than she thought necessary for him to spend on deck, she beheld him advancing slowly toward his own room, leaning on the arm of a gentleman with whom he had no acquaintance, pale, faint, and with blood flowing pretty freely from his mouth. The moment she laid her eyes on him, and discovered the condition in which he was, she ran forward to meet him. "My poor, dear friend," she exclaimed, "what has happened to distress you? You are pale and bleeding, and look as if you had sustained some sudden and strange disaster."

Mr. Marshfield made no reply to her remarks, but the person who supported him observed that "he believed the gentleman had ruptured a blood-vessel, and that perhaps he was laboring under some other injury,"

"Then conduct him at once to his room!" cried Agnes; and taking the lead herself, she saw her friend carefully bestowed in his own comfortable berth.

"Alas!" said Agnes, "this is sickness—this, I am afraid, is the entire exhaustion of a form already too much



enfeebled by disease—it may be the harbinger of death itself.”

A physician was called in, who happened to be one of the passengers on his way to California. A slight examination of the condition of his patient soon informed him of the nature of his disease. He pronounced it to be hemorrhage of the lungs, brought on in all probability by the excessive exertion of his bodily organs, and by too great anxiety of mind.

When this information was communicated to Agnes, she was ready to swoon away under a sense of her own misery. The shock which it caused to her feelings unnerved her so completely that she was scarcely sensible of the language in which she uttered her melancholy complaints. “My protector, my guardian, my best friend,” she exclaimed, “will be taken from me! I shall be left helpless and desolate among strangers! Oh, God! this is a trial which I could hardly have anticipated.”

The friends of Agnes endeavored to cheer and comfort her. She was told by the physician that the attack Mr. Marshfield was called to encounter, although in itself severe and dangerous, would not necessarily be followed by death. He might live months and years yet, and even by careful treatment be restored again to entire and perfect health.

Agnes was led away to her own room, much distressed and disordered indeed from the scenes she had passed through during the preceding day, but not without hope. Maggy remained with her, as her nurse and attendant, during the night. Such remedies were applied in the case of Mr. Marshfield as were calculated to deliver him from immediate danger, but he was left in a very weak and precarious condition.



## CHAPTER XXV.

AGNES, notwithstanding her broken slumbers, and the great anxiety she had gone through during the previous day, rose early in the morning, and her first inquiry, of course, had relation to the state and feelings of her friend, Mr. Marshfield. She hastened to his room in person, and kindly requested from his own mouth a statement of the condition of his health. By this time he had so far recovered from the first attack of his malady, as to be able to speak without aggravating the symptoms under which he labored, and without exposing himself to pain or inconvenience.

"Sit down, my child," he said, as soon as Agnes had entered the door of his apartment. "I have been thinking a good deal about you during the past night, and have not been unmindful of my own frail and altered condition. It was a remarkable providence that introduced us to each other under circumstances which were unusual and peculiar, and for which I can plainly see we have both reason to be thankful. I feel conscious on my part of having profited much by the simplicity and truth of your conversation,—of having been prepared by you for the event which has just overtaken me, and for that more awful crisis which will perhaps soon terminate my earthly existence."

Here Agnes, with tears in her eyes, was about to interrupt the speaker—but he waived his hand in token of silence, and continued his address to her as follows:

"What I have to say, Miss Russell, I wish to say at once, while I am favored with strength and ability for that purpose. I remarked just now that I had profited greatly from your acquaintance and conversation, and I feel conscious that I too have a duty to perform toward you from which you may derive lasting benefit. Listen, and follow my instructions."

Here Mr. Marshfield paused for a moment, in order to



gain strength for the further prosecution of his discourse, after which he continued his remarks as follows :

"My first introduction to you, as you know, was brought about by Captain Lamberton, who addressed a note to your father on the subject of your brother's sickness. At that time I supposed the captain had no other object in view than to benefit your family, and send relief, as far as it was in his power, to your brother. But I had some reason afterward to doubt the sincerity and purity of his intentions. Intimations were more than once given to me by Mr. Braxton, who is in the employment of Captain Lamberton, that the sole object of the latter was to persuade you to visit California, for the purpose, if possible, of winning your affections, or, if he found that could not be accomplished, of coercing you by some means into a matrimonial alliance contrary to your own wishes and inclination. This he supposed he would be able to effect even if your brother should recover from his sickness, and continue to reside in San Francisco, of which, however, he was by no means assured, as your brother always talked of removing to some other part of California as soon as he should be sufficiently restored to health to do so. But all this was not fully revealed to me, although I previously had strong reasons to doubt the integrity and good faith of Captain Lamberton, until you and I had taken passage in this vessel, and had actually entered on board for the purpose of proceeding on our destined voyage. It was on the very day that the ship in which we now are was about to sail, and just before she weighed anchor for that purpose, that our friend Braxton came on board, and put into my hands this letter." [Here he took a letter from a large pocket-book which he had deposited under his pillow.] "Take this document," Mr. Marshfield continued, "and keep it until you may have occasion to use it. I do not wish you to read it now, but I desire that you may retain it in your possession, and take especial care of it, as some day or other it may prove your best security against the stratagems of Captain Lamberton."

Mr. Marshfield again paused in order to take breath, and Miss Russell was too much absorbed in her own feelings, and too much bewildered by the new and hurried



thoughts that shot through her brain, to attempt any immediate answer to the disclosures so suddenly and so unexpectedly made by her sick friend.

After a brief interval, Mr. Marshfield continued in the following strain:

“It was my intention to reveal all this to you as soon as we should arrive at San Francisco, and should make ourselves acquainted with the situation and movements of your brother; and, in the mean time, I had resolved, as far as opportunity and strength would have been given me, steadfastly to adhere to you as your earthly friend and protector. But God only knows whether I shall be spared to reach with you the end of this voyage. Should my earthly pilgrimage terminate before that time, let me advise you to place great confidence in the man you call Billy Braxton. I believe him to be your friend, and from my knowledge of his dexterity and address, and of his innate dislike and opposition to everything like baseness and treachery, I have reason to think, however much it may operate to his disadvantage, that he will be induced to espouse your interests in preference to those of Captain Lamberton.”

Poor Agnes was greatly overcome by an interview which exercised both her understanding and affections, and which was the means of disclosing a state of things at once melancholy and surprising. She could not doubt, from what she saw and heard, but that the life of her friend—of her dearest and best friend in the dark hour of adversity—was in imminent danger. A single day, or an hour, might open for him the portals of eternity. And then she would be cast on the world alone, not only far from home and friends, and amid entire strangers, but beset by one whose object was to betray her peace, and to inveigle her into a hateful union, which was alike repugnant to her feelings and her principles. These reflections were distressing, and weighed on her bosom with a heaviness that was almost greater than she could bear. And yet, in the midst of this severe pressure of affliction, she was happy in entertaining other thoughts, which, like angels' visits, seemed kindly to come to her relief. She hoped, in the first place, although she could not but confess this to be one of her faintest supports, that Mr. Marsh-



field would in a few days be restored to health, and that he would stand by her side, as her protector and counselor, when her present perilous voyage should be ended. And then she thought of the promises made to her by Mr. Stanley and his daughter, and of the protection she might derive from the friendship of that mysterious being, Billy Braxton. Nor was she unmindful of the strong confidence she was able to repose in her humble companion and fellow-sufferer Maggy. That plain, unpretending individual, with nothing to boast of but her good feelings and resolute heart, seemed nevertheless to stand before her like a bulwark of strength, and was pledged to befriend her in every emergency that could happen. Animated with such reflections as these, Agnes felt herself to be borne up above the common accidents and contingencies of life, and to be supported in the midst of her own sharp and peculiar sorrows. She thanked Mr. Marshfield for the information he had imparted to her, and for the deep interest he manifested in her welfare, and having uttered a prayer for his own recovery, she left his apartment with a subdued, but with a strong, confiding, and courageous heart.

The condition of Mr. Marshfield required unremitting watchfulness and attention. Maggy waited on him with the assiduity of a faithful nurse. Mr. Stanley was frequently at his bedside, cheered, counseled, and encouraged him, and fortified his mind with the sweet assurance of another and better world. But Agnes was his favorite and most constant attendant. She provided for all his little wants, read the Bible for him, listened to the history of his past life, and sometimes even attempted to interest him with a few passages in her own. This continued for some days, but with no sensible alteration in the character of his disease. At the expiration of about a week after he experienced the first attack, it was agreed by Mr. Stanley and Agnes that he was growing worse instead of better. He did not complain of pain, nor was there a repetition of the flow of blood from his lungs—on the contrary, his breathing seemed more perfect, and his rest more easy. But he was more frequently overcome by fits of drowsiness and languor, and his eyes had lost much of their brightness and luster. He seemed also less concerned about the affairs of life, and was entirely passive under



every arrangement that was proposed either by his nurse or physician.

Two days after this Agnes was sitting alone at his bedside. She had just read to him that beautiful psalm, beginning with the consolatory declaration, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He seemed to listen with profound reverence and attention to the words as she pronounced them, and at the close he observed, with an emphasis that was above his ordinary strength, "That psalm gives me victory over death and the grave!" Agnes turned her eyes toward her friend with just alarm, for she was made sensible from the tones of his voice, as well as from the expression of his countenance, that some remarkable change had just taken place in the progress of his disease. "Are you better, Mr. Marshfield?" she exclaimed, scarcely knowing what she said. "I am well," was his feeble answer. Then folding his arms across his breast, and looking on Agnes with a complacent smile, as if for the purpose of bidding her a lasting farewell, he closed his eyes on the fading objects of time, and the spirit of Walter Marshfield ascended to its dwelling-place in heaven.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM what we have already observed in the preceding chapter, it will not surprise our readers to be told that Agnes Russell manifested a degree of strength and fortitude on the present occasion that was as remarkable as it was unexpected by those who had been previously observing her mere external conduct. Her inward spirit, as we have seen, was elevated into a sphere of thought and discernment that imparted consolation to her feelings, and gave to her heart a hope and confidence that triumphed over the profoundness and extremity of her grief. She retired from the scene of death with a serenity so calm and uncomplaining, that even Maggy was at a loss to account for so much tranquillity and courage. Mr. Stanley and his daughter were still more surprised at the quiet



resignation which was so sensibly depicted in her countenance, and only admired her fortitude the more as it had been the less looked for and expected.

The next day was appointed for consigning the corpse of Mr. Marshfield to the silent depths of the ocean. This mournful ceremony was to be attended to at the hour of noon, and in the presence of all on board. The day was bright and calm, the sea was unruffled, and the deep-blue sky seemed to be in unison with the solemnity of the occasion. The commander of the vessel ordered the sails to be furled, and the flags to be lowered, during the performance of the ceremony. Mr. Stanley, although deeply affected by the death of his friend, and liable to be overcome by the tenderness of his feelings, agreed to read the funeral service, according to the form prescribed by the Church of England.

When the hour arrived for the solemn service to commence, the coffin or box in which the body had been deposited was brought on deck, and was placed in a position ready for its sudden precipitation into the deep. The passengers and crew assembled round it in serious and respectful order, his more immediate friends taking their positions nearest to the coffin. Mr. Stanley stood at the head, while Agnes and Maggy occupied a place at the foot, and Miss Stanley and Molton Fairview took their stations in the center. The latter had the duty assigned him of holding the end of a rope, and at a given signal from the boatswain, he was to suffer the coffin to glide from the side of the vessel into the ocean, which was waiting to receive it.

Mr. Stanley pronounced a very brief but pathetic discourse on the occasion, which was listened to with deep and attentive silence by his audience. He then commenced reading the Church service over the body, which seemed to be still more solemn and affecting. The silvery tones of his voice, and his stately manner, imparted a most pathetic interest to the ceremony. When he came to those expressive words which so strikingly represent the reduction of the corporeal organization into its original elements, he lowered the sounds of his voice to their greatest depth, proceeded with louder articulation to read the sentences which immediately followed, and then exclaimed with more breadth and emphasis, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to



dust! Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." These pathetic passages were made the concluding part of the service. As soon as they were pronounced, the boatswain uttered a shrill sound with his whistle, and Molton Fairview suffered the coffin to descend at once to its watery element. The plunge was quick and precipitate, and the body was buried as quickly beneath the waves of the ocean. But almost before the mighty deep had time to close over it, Agnes Russell uttered a loud scream, and it was announced by more than one voice that the boy had been dragged overboard. He had, in some way or other, become entangled in the rope that he held, which was the cause of this sudden catastrophe.

The boy was seen to struggle on the surface of the water for some time, but before the vessel could be stopped, and a boat lowered for his relief, he had disappeared from those who were watching his motions, and it was supposed that he had sunk never to rise again. All professed to feel a deep interest in his fate, but no one lamented it more sincerely, or yielded to its certainty with more reluctance, than Agnes Russell. She carefully examined everything about the ship that came under her observation. While thus engaged in performing what she believed to be her simple duty, she cast her eye on the rudder, which had not before attracted any part of her attention. In a moment she became aware that the rope, which had been the unfortunate instrument of precipitating the boy into the water, had fastened itself between the rudder and the keel of the vessel, and in all probability still held his body attached to it, although it was difficult to say in what manner. As soon as these impressions were made on her mind she communicated them to the men who had come to the boy's rescue. The suggestion was a happy one. They proceeded at once to draw in the rope, and to the great surprise of the passengers, and the equally great gratification of Agnes, the body of the boy was raised to the surface of the water, and safely deposited at the bottom of the boat.

All now who had witnessed the occurrence of this melancholy event were eager and anxious to know whether he was dead or alive. As soon as he was brought on deck



every possible means was resorted to to effect his resuscitation. These efforts were persisted in until shortly afterward Molton opened his eyes again on the objects around him. In a few days he recovered from his languor and debility, and was inclined to be as noisy and mischievous as ever.

"It is strange," observed Molton, in speaking of the narrow escape he had made from a watery grave, "that I should have been so very careful, on my mother's account, when the ship struck, as not to venture out of the cabin, and yet that I should have played my part so rashly as to plunge into the water when engaged in discharging my duty at the funeral of Mr. Marshfield. Nobody, Miss Agnes, but myself, can tell what I experienced and felt while drowning in the midst of the angry sea. I seemed to live my whole lifetime over again, and thought a great deal, I do assure you, of my poor mother."

This was not the first time that Agnes had heard him mention the name of his mother in the most tender and affectionate terms. She thought, indeed, that he pronounced this name at the very moment when he was about to sink in the depth of the ocean, and she was sure that the first words he uttered after he was restored from insensibility to a state of consciousness were, "Oh, my poor mother!" It was only natural, therefore, that she should feel a strong inclination to make some inquiries respecting this near and tender relationship to which he himself had so often adverted, and in which he seemed to feel such a deep interest. But she found he was not disposed to gratify her curiosity. Whenever she attempted to bring the subject to his notice he would invariably utter the words, "my poor mother!" and having made this exclamation, he would either endeavor to divert the conversation to some other topic, or would walk away without answering the questions propounded to him.

For some days after the death of Mr. Marshfield, Agnes could not but feel the great weight of the bereavement, but, as we have already hinted, she bore it with remarkable cheerfulness and composure. Mr. Stanley and his daughter were, of course, her constant companions. In their society she found relief from many gloomy reflections, which otherwise might have caused her great uneasiness,



and have reduced her mind to a state of habitual darkness and despondency. She felt thankful that her courage and resolution appeared to be equal to the trials she was called to encounter, and that in her saddest moments she could find a consolation in her own thoughts that was equal to her greatest afflictions.

Nothing very remarkable happened to any of the parties we have mentioned during the remainder of the voyage. They reached the isthmus, and crossed over to Panama. From thence they took the wide sweep of the Pacific Ocean, and sailed along the Mexican coast, that now revealed to the eyes of the delighted passengers many prominent features of beauty and sublimity. Magnificent islands seemed resting on the surface of the water, like gardens of Eastern fable called into existence by the wand of the enchanter. Green hills sloped up from the margin of the sea to an elevation truly grand and picturesque, affording to the eyes of the eager beholder a sight that was magnificent and imposing, presenting not only a thousand interesting objects of living reality, but forming an extended outline of dim and indistinct coloring, where the fancy might revel in boundless scenes of loveliness and grandeur. The sides of these hills, from top to bottom, were moulded into picturesque terraces, where plants and trees, and fruits and flowers, exhibited their various attractions in almost endless variety. The golden orange, the banana, the tamarind, and the palm, breathed their luxurious sweets under a clear sky, and in a climate that seemed to be genial and healthy. These sights and scenes were the admiration of the voyagers as they passed, and seemed to possess a still deeper interest when they were left behind by the rapid motion of the vessel.

What a vast and varied region was here presented for the contemplation of the poet! How pure and happy he might suppose were the lives of its simple inhabitants—how innocent and patriarchal were their unpretending habits—how virtuous and holy they were in their thoughts and devotions! Such would be his feelings and sentiments while giving indulgence to a lively and heated imagination. But, alas! what a different picture would present itself to his mind had he but an opportunity of landing on the shore, and witnessing the stern reality, instead of



this fascinating illusion! The beauty of the landscape would, indeed, still be there. The vine and orange would still hang in pendent clusters of tempting luxuriance. The cocoa and the palm would expand their broad leaves in refreshing shadows over the land, and would invite him to partake of their fruits and flowers. But the charm of a holy and consecrated life would be wanting—the fancied happiness that he identified with this beautiful Eden would elude his most eager scrutiny. He would find that the tempter, even here, with all his selfishness and all his pride—with all his profligacy and all his sin—had found his way into the Paradise of God.

Toward evening Agnes had the pleasure of witnessing the glories of a brilliant sunset on the Pacific. Far down toward the verge of the horizon the pearly light spread in all directions like an ocean of flame. It shone and blazed in the sky above and in the wide expanse of water beneath with a truly splendid magnificence. The heavens seemed to be studded with golden sapphires. The ambient clouds poured forth a volume of variegated fire that jetted from above in a thousand beautiful tints. All the colors of the rainbow appeared to be called into existence by the pure light of a world that is bright and spiritual, and this light imparted its splendor and glory to the sky, to the clouds, and to the waves that rose and fell in the midst of the flaming ocean. Like inferior lights that are kindled on earth, one portion of the sparkling mass followed another in constant and almost endless succession. The change was unceasingly going on, now blending into purple and gold, now lining the transparent clouds with violet and blue, now shining forth like strong vivid flashes of lightning, and now spreading its blushing sheet of pearly whiteness over the entire illumination by which the sun was surrounded. Here was a scene of glory, surpassing all human skill, all human fancy, to rival or imitate. And yet it was but the repetition of that which is almost of daily occurrence. It was but the ordinary appearance of a sunset on the Pacific.

It was pleasant, too, to a mind gifted with a taste for the sublime and beautiful, to watch at a distance the peaks of lofty Mexican mountains, rearing their dusky summits to the sky, and towering far above the landscape scenery that



covered the intervening country. These huge structures seemed to correspond with the vast resources of that great continent, which, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, is one day to comprise the mightiest and the most flourishing empire of the world. While their dense masses might be called the emblems of strength and security, their vast extent of vegetation, with its everlasting verdure and foliage, seemed to proclaim the approach of a corresponding period of virtue, improvement, and intelligence.

The noble ship, "walking the waters like a thing of life," passed rapidly over the liquid track in which she held her course. Far away to the west immense mountain ridges appeared to stretch across the continent of firm land, like huge belts purposely designed to give firmness and stability to the distant regions of earth which they bound together. Many an eye was fixed with deep interest on the dim outline of these everlasting hills. It was not only that they stretched to an inconceivable distance, but they towered up to an immense height, and sometimes more than transcended the tall summits of Mont Blanc. And now the admiring crowd passed Acapulco, San Blas, and the green islands lying scattered in their way, but which were too small and too numerous to interfere with the onward progress of their rapid voyage. At length they came in sight of the walls of Mazatlan, under a sky that was clear and cloudless, and with a breeze that hurried them on toward one of the extremities of the peninsula. Before long they descried the coast of California, and, steering by the nearest points, soon rounded into the Bay of San Francisco.

It must not be forgotten that the voyage we have been describing was made in the year 1849, at a time when emigration to that supposed Eldorado was immensely active, but before any very substantial improvements had been erected for the comfort and convenience of the early settlers. As the vessel approached in front of the city all eyes were intently riveted on the objects of wonder and curiosity that characterized its primitive appearance. The irregularity of the ground on which it was about to be erected, and over which it was to rise like the enchanted palace so wonderfully formed by the lamp of Aladdin, was



not the only phenomenon that attracted their attention. Its strange, half-finished and half-modeled houses—its canvas tents, stretched out as substitutes for more comfortable dwellings—its vigorous appropriation of every foot of ground that could be made subservient to the purposes of a human habitation—its inhospitable cellars occupied as places of business—its still more inhospitable caves sheltering the poor and friendless—its gambling establishments, its restaurants, and its capacious but slightly secured hotels,—all this presented a scene so novel, and to many so discouraging, that it is not wonderful their attention should have been completely absorbed by the singular and uncommon objects that occupied their eyesight. For Agnes Russell, especially, the distant city had an interest, which was felt by her so acutely that it caused the blood to course more rapidly through her whole frame. She was sensible of the increased motion of her heart. But she recollected at the same time that this was a weakness to which neither her character nor her circumstances must suffer her to give way. She earnestly strove, therefore, to counteract its enervating influence. In a few moments she shook off the tremor by which she had been agitated, and again resumed her ordinary smiles and cheerfulness. As the boat in which the passengers landed approached the shore, Agnes Russell was the animating spirit that imparted motion and life to its timid and bewildered passengers. She made a jest of the incidents likely to befall them on their first landing. “We must be cheerful and courageous,” said she, “or we shall be known as suitable victims of plunder, whom all may rob because all may insult with impunity. We must assume some consequence in directing our own movements, and, in order to be well served, must command rather than entreat the favors of our new friends. I do not mean that we should be bold, insolent, or disdainful, but as all are selfish in a community like this, and each one believes he has enough to do to take care of himself, we must endeavor to assert a spirit of independence, in order to preserve our own freedom, and become independent in reality.”



## CHAPTER XXVII.

MISS RUSSELL landed from the same boat with Mr. Stanley and his daughter, and immediately placed herself under the protection and guidance of that gentleman, and accompanied him to the same hotel. As is usual on such occasions, every one who had the means of bearing the expense was anxiously rushing forward for the purpose of securing comfortable accommodations, and placing himself in the way of having his own wants supplied in the first place. The struggle which was carried on for precedence in these particulars seemed to be one in which Mr. Stanley and his companions could not enter into but with disadvantage. Out of the number of four persons, of which their company consisted, and who were looking out for accommodations amid the strife and competition which prevailed so extensively in relation to this subject, three of them were females, a class of persons who as yet had not ventured to cast their lot in the busy vortex of this new Eldorado, and whose requirements and wants, it was well known to all considerate landlords, demanded a special care and attention which it seemed almost impossible to supply. But Mr. Stanley pressed forward with the crowd, and made his appeal in warm and eloquent language. He was fortunate in meeting with the keeper of a hotel who was both a Yankee and a gentleman, and who promised to do all for his female companions that could be effected under circumstances so unpropitious and discouraging.

The building itself to which they repaired, when considered in all its various compartments of clay, canvas, and wood, was large and roomy, but was so strangely put together that, like the literary productions of some of our best authors, it had neither beginning, middle, nor end. It was extensive and capacious indeed, but was composed of so many particulars, apparently brought together just as some new exigency might require, and arranged in a style



of such delectable confusion, that Abbotsford itself might make some claim to a symmetrical structure when compared with the confused mass of materials, piled up without order, and without the least regard to taste, beauty, or convenience. The kitchen seemed to have been first built, and occupied a front position amid the great variety of subordinate apartments by which it was flanked on all sides. These apartments ran into and over each other, like the old and dilapidated ranges of stabling which are still seen to adorn some of our best farms in remote and unfrequented counties in the Atlantic States. Some important appendages of the building were only half finished, and other portions of it, shrouded in canvas, and presenting the appearance of a huge babe in swaddling-clothes, may be said to have been scarcely commenced. But what rendered this uncouth building still more repulsive was the mud and dust which, according to the season of the year, either coated it over like the outside plastering of a brick-kiln, or disfigured it with a dirty powder like an alderman's wig. It was now raining, and Mr. Stanley and his companions were compelled to wade through successive layers of mud before reaching the hotel, which presented to their senses such an uninviting appearance.

The apartment assigned to Agnes and Maggy was narrow and confined, but possessed some advantages which gave it a decided preference over other rooms that might have been selected before it. It was found, indeed, to be bounded on one side by a billiard-saloon, from which it was divided by a thin board partition, not sufficiently substantial to prevent the recognition in one apartment of words or sounds that might be uttered in the other. It was, moreover, furnished with no fire-place, the want of which was at that season sensibly felt, in consequence of the cold and dampness that prevailed without, and there was not the slightest recess or closet for anything like even a meager wardrobe. As a contrast, however, to these disadvantages, its windows looked out on the front street; the room was light and airy, and it was so remotely situated from any of the public passages of the building, that its inmates were not likely to be disturbed by the intrusion of visitors and strangers.



One of the first objects of Agnes was, of course, to inquire after her brother. She had brought no letters of introduction with her that could make her acquainted with a single inhabitant of the place, having depended on the kindness and friendship of Mr. Marshfield for counsel and advice, and for the necessary information she might require, after arriving at the end of her voyage. She was now compelled, however, to resort to those means of knowledge which first presented themselves, and which appeared to her to be the most obvious and reliable. For this purpose she made it a point, as soon as she found herself fairly settled in her own apartment, to effect an immediate interview with the landlord. We have already said that he was a kind and accommodating person, and always took pains to comply, as far as he was able, with the wishes and desires of his guests. But on the present occasion he could give Agnes but little satisfactory information. He told her indeed that he had heard of such a person as Alfred Russell, and even mentioned the name of the hotel at which he believed he had boarded, but he could not positively say what had become of him. He was almost sure that he had recovered from his sickness, and he thought he had a distinct recollection of hearing somebody say that he had either removed to some other part of California, or that he had settled up his business in San Francisco, and returned home.

Having failed in obtaining the information she wanted from this quarter, she was induced at once to prevail on Mr. Stanley to make such inquiries as would lead to a more correct knowledge of the matter. Her solicitude on account of her brother was exceedingly great, and he promised to prosecute his inquiries without delay in such directions as he might believe would lead to the most satisfactory results. He accordingly left the hotel in the afternoon, with no other object in view than to obtain some specific information in regard to the state and circumstances of Alfred Russell.

During the absence of Mr. Stanley an occurrence took place which gave a still more extraordinary and romantic turn to the adventures of Agnes Russell. We have already noticed that the room or apartment she occupied with her companion Maggy was directly contiguous to a much



larger one used as a billiard-saloon, and which was divided by a partition so thin and impressible that words uttered in one apartment might be distinctly heard in the other. But there was no door or window or aperture of any kind that opened an immediate communication between the two. The only possible means of seeing from one apartment into the other was from behind a shabby looking-glass, which Agnes accidentally discovered concealed a small opening, through which she was able to see objects in the adjoining apartment. Having made this discovery, it is not to be supposed that she entertained any considerations sufficiently strong to prevent her from exploring the objects which lay so close to her, and which, although she had not heretofore seen, she had heard with such loud and palpable distinctness. She accordingly applied her eye to the aperture in the partition, and was greatly surprised at the appearances which presented themselves on the other side. The billiard-table seemed to be deserted, as if its recent occupants had just retired from the apartment. But, leaning over the green surface on which the game is played, she saw two individuals, whom she immediately recognized to be Billy Braxton and Percy Courtland. At first she was ready to burst out into an exclamation of surprise and wonder; but, remembering that Maggy was in the room, and that any violent movement on her part could not fail to reach the ears of those who were leaning over the billiard-table, she felt how necessary it was to obtain a perfect command over her own feelings. The two individuals we have mentioned, when first discovered, were standing opposite a door which opened from the billiard-room on the landing of a stairway leading directly down to the main street. They appeared to be in earnest conversation, speaking in a tone of voice, however, which could not be understood by Agnes, and every now and then looking toward the aforesaid door, as if afraid that their discourse might be listened to by some one outside, or might be heard by persons in the street below. At length, as if by mutual consent, they advanced farther into the interior of the apartment, and approached nearer to the spot where Agnes stood, as if purposely to avoid being overheard by persons who might be lounging in or near some other part of the building.



"I tell you," said Percy, as he advanced toward the extremity of the room, "that his object was to ruin me in the City of New York, after having first treacherously poisoned my mind against a kind and true-hearted father, and caused me to suspect the love and attachment of a faithful and generous brother. He is a desperate adventurer, who will not fail to pursue me with spite and malignity the moment he discovers that I have set my foot on the shores of California."

"I know that he is seeking to injure you, and I know the cause of it," answered Braxton; "and your best plan will be to get out of his reach as soon as possible. I will take care that you shall understand more about him after awhile."

"But how will it be possible for me to escape Captain Lamberton now?" said Percy, "since I am told he exercises an extraordinary influence in this region of country, and is connected extensively not only with its mining operations, but even with the political regulations which have been established for the government of the people."

"Fly to the mountains!" exclaimed Braxton. "Go work in the mines! Your fortune may yet turn out to be prosperous, and you may accumulate not only wealth but power too, which one day or other may afford you an opportunity of turning the tables on your treacherous betrayer."

"It shall even be so, then," answered Percy; "and tomorrow I will direct my steps to the first place I may have a chance of reaching with a reasonable prospect of success and profit."

This scene, and the conversation we have narrated between the parties, and which was distinctly overheard by Agnes, created in her bosom a feeling of concern which she found it almost impossible to bear without declaring it openly. But no person was present but Maggy, and this faithful girl was so busily employed at the time in some little pursuit of her own that she neither observed the motions of Agnes nor overheard the expressions that came from the two individuals in the adjoining apartment. Nor did Agnes deem it prudent to reveal what she had heard and seen to her companion. She thought it would at least be better to postpone it for the present, until she



should be more certainly informed of the movements and intentions of Percy Courtland.

Agnes hastily replaced the small antiquated mirror she had removed from the partition, so as effectually to shut up the aperture which communicated between the two apartments, and then sat down to reflect on the singular occurrence which had just passed before her eyes.

"It is not wonderful," said she to herself, "that both Captain Lamberton and Braxton should be now in San Francisco, since I had reason to believe, before I left New York, that they contemplated sailing for California about the same time I myself sailed in company with Mr. Marshfield. It is remarkable, however, that Percy Courtland should be one of the first persons to salute my eyes after my arrival here, and under circumstances so strange and peculiar. But he had some acquaintance with Billy Braxton before he deserted his father's dwelling, and their being together in a billiard-room, at an hour when its usual employments are not attended to, and when no persons are present but themselves, may have been occasioned by a desire on the part of both of them for a private and secluded interview. What may have exactly transpired between Captain Lamberton and Percy it is impossible for me to know; but certain it is that the former has contrived to do some injury to the latter. And yet they must both have sailed in the same ship, and must have arrived here at the same time. These are circumstances which, in all probability, will unfold themselves at some future period. But how am I to act in the interval? Shall I reveal what has occurred to those around me, and endeavor to avail myself of their advice and counsel? Shall I make inquiries after Percy Courtland, and frankly inform him of my own trials and difficulties? Such a course would do violence to my most sacred feelings, and might in the end only add to the sorrows of one whose own troubles are sufficient for the trial of his virtues and resolution. I will for the present conceal what I have heard and seen within my own bosom. Billy Braxton certainly knows I am here, and might have given this information to Percy if he had thought proper to do so. But for some reason or other he has kept this knowledge from him, and I have been assured not only by himself, but by Mr.



Marshfield too, when on the very verge of the grave, that this man is my friend. I will therefore wait the slow disclosures of the future, rather than hazard my own safety, and perhaps the safety of Percy too, by a too precipitate revelation of what has taken place to-day. I will communicate the secret for the present to nobody, not even to my brother, should I be so fortunate as to meet him according to my previous expectations."

Agnes rose from the chair in which she was seated, and stood for a few moments at one of the windows that looked out on the main street. Her feelings had been wrought up to a pitch of melancholy anxiety, which now weighed heavily on her bosom. She could not but feel the loneliness and distress of her present situation—a female—a stranger amid scenes and circumstances of novel and unusual occurrence—friendless and helpless in a community of people of extraordinary selfishness—a frail and sorrowful being, in pursuit of an object for which she had risked much and suffered much, and which was at last perhaps to elude her grasp, and disappoint her in the purposes of her sacred mission. "But I will not despair," she said. "Nay, I will not suffer the demon of melancholy to impose on my firmness and resolution. He may, indeed, harass and distress me for a season,—he may take advantage of my weakness and helplessness,—he may afflict me with sorrow and sighing,—but he must not, he shall not, overcome me!"



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN the midst of these gloomy reflections, Agnes was surprised to behold the sudden appearance of a crowd of men and boys right below the window where she stood, now pausing and shouting, as if in sight of some object which they were anxious to see approach, and then moving along in noisy confusion to a spot a little farther down the street, and assembling around a gibbet, which seemed to have been recently erected, and from which a rope was suspended, as if for the purpose of doing immediate execution on some doomed and appointed victim. The crowd swept along in constantly increasing masses, and the shouts and uproar of the mob continued to grow louder and louder. "Hurry! hurry!" exclaimed a number of voices from one quarter: "pass on the scoundrel to the death he deserves!" "Away with the murderer and thief!" was shouted in another direction: "tuck him up to the gallows which is prepared for him! hang the merciless rascal by the neck until he shall be dead!" From one end of the street to the other nothing was heard but terrible sounds like these—nothing was seen but the wild movements of an infuriated mob, thirsting for the blood of a fellow-mortal like themselves. Presently the unfortunate victim was seen approaching in person. He was urged, or rather dragged, along by two men of fierce and brutal appearance, surrounded by half a dozen others, whose countenances betrayed the same deadly hate and fury, and all of whom seemed to be anxious for that terrible expiation which in a few minutes was to be made by their unhappy victim. When they arrived at a point immediately opposite the window where Agnes was standing, the unfortunate man sank for a moment to the earth, overpowered by exhaustion, and perhaps by a sense of the shame which was about to rest on his memory. "Great God!" he exclaimed, as he fixed his eyes on the awful gallows, which was planted immediately before him, "must



I indeed die this terrible and shameful death? Canst thou not deliver me from the hands of these bloody and cruel men?" Then turning to his persecutors, he ejaculated in a still more passionate, but more plaintive voice, "Oh, my friends, do not kill me! Do not take my defenseless life! I have feelings like yourselves, and am a husband and father. Spare me, spare me from the dreadful doom of this shocking calamity! Spare me for the sake of my suffering wife—for the sake of my weeping and innocent children!" There was a momentary pause, even on the part of those cruel men who were forcing him to execution, on his uttering these melancholy words. The dense crowd stood motionless, and gasped, as if making an effort to regain its lost respiration. The man was raised again to his feet, and now seemed to awe the ranks of the surrounding multitude into something like tenderness and compassion. This was the crisis of his fate, and perhaps was the very moment in which an effectual appeal might have been made in his favor. But there was no one to second his own simple and passionate eloquence. All stood mute, because all were brought to that state of hesitating anxiety which springs from the combined feelings of fear, pity, and uncertainty. A single voice exerted in the cause of humanity—or more properly speaking, in the cause of justice—might have disarmed cruelty of its hardened purpose, and restored the wretch, who was gasping within the jaws of death, to the enjoyment of freedom and life.

At length this awful pause was broken by one of the misguided ministers of vengeance who was guarding him to his execution. "Shall we go on, comrades?" said this self-constituted vindicator of the law, as if he himself was doubtful of the justice as well as of the legality of the cruel proceeding. "Let us do our duty!" cried another of the same bloody fraternity. The moment this was said a loud huzza was raised by the collected populace around, and the poor man was again hurried forward amid the noise and confusion of the excited mob. Again he supplicated for mercy, and attempted to vindicate his conduct from the charges brought against him. But his weak voice was drowned by the tremendous shouts which now, more than ever, demanded the sacrifice of his life. He was derided



and insulted by the furious clamor of the exasperated multitude, and in this manner was forcibly dragged along until he reached the foot of the gallows.

Here again there was a brief pause before attempting to inflict the fatal punishment denounced against the sufferer, and a brief cessation of the popular excitement which had hurried him to execution. Now that they had arrived beneath the terrifying gibbet that was to terminate his sufferings, and saw the preparations around them for the execution of a summary and violent death, the very guards who were foremost in demanding his blood seemed to be almost as much overcome by these circumstances as the prisoner was himself. They stared at each other as if inquiring who should be the first to commence the dreadful tragedy. The poor victim himself gazed around in supplicating bewilderment, as if still expecting some champion to espouse his cause, and to make an impression on the minds of the assembled multitude, which would in the end revoke his terrible sentence.

For a few moments the feelings of the vacillating crowd were held in the most painful suspense. Had a vote at that period been taken on the subject of the prisoner's doom, it might have been doubtful whether the majority would have cast their suffrages for execution or pardon. But no one attempted to interfere; and the poor man, who was arraigned without a specification of his offense, and condemned without a hearing, it was evident to the bystanders, had made up his mind to submit to his fate. His executioners, who stood around him under the gallows, began to whisper in each other's ears. They adjusted the platform on which he was to stand, and one of them took hold of the fatal rope which was to suspend him by the neck until he was dead.

At that awful moment, when the pulsations of every heart present began to beat quicker, and the feelings of mercy crept from bosom to bosom, the astonished crowd were electrified by seeing a boy suddenly start up, as if from the depths of the earth, and take his station on the top of the platform from which the prisoner was to be launched into eternity. No person professed to know from whence this sudden apparition came, but all seemed to welcome it as a relief, and to regard it with that kind of superstitious



reverence which is so often paid to circumstances involving the suddenness of surprise or alarm.

The boy at once proceeded to make an earnest appeal to the multitude in behalf of the prisoner; but we will not undertake here to record the language that dropped from his lips. It was not that which had its effect on his auditors. It was the solemn and earnest manner in which he pointed to the prisoner—the artless motion of his hands in which he denounced vengeance against his murderers—the sincere gush of tears with which he lamented his untimely and cruel fate, and with which he mourned at the same time the sufferings of his far-distant wife and children—it was these which caused an immediate reaction in the breasts of the fickle multitude, and opened their eyes to the gross injustice they might be doing to a defenseless and innocent man. All eyes were astonished at the boldness, and all hearts were pleased with the truth and earnestness, of the heroic boy.

Another pause ensued, and another period of suspense operated on the feelings of the waiting multitude. The crowd around gazed at each other in the most profound silence, no one venturing to renew the clamor which had been so loud and urgent only a few minutes before. The guards themselves, who had the unfortunate prisoner in custody, seemed to be stupefied under a weight of contending emotions which deprived them of all choice of action, and rendered them entirely passive under the pressure of surrounding circumstances. At length a more collected, and, it may be, a more humane, by-stander, was led to take advantage of the doubt and indecision which pervaded the minds of the leading actors in this disgraceful tragedy. Suddenly struggling toward the center of the ring in which the unfortunate man stood surrounded by his enemies, and placing himself at his side, he whispered a few words in his ear, and taking him by the arm, led him boldly forth through that part of the crowd which was the most dense and impenetrable. His keepers submitted in mute astonishment to this bold and deliberate rescue, and before they had time to summon to their aid the little reflection that was left them, the prisoner and his deliverer had effectually escaped from their clutches, followed by the boy who had been the successful cause of his being restored to liberty.



Here, then, was an example of the shocking manner in which, in too many instances, justice was attempted to be administered by those who took the law into their own hands, and which constituted what in California, and indeed in other parts of our country, was known by the name of Lynch-law. Had the life of the unfortunate victim on this occasion been made the forfeit of his alleged crimes, whether the charges against him were true or false, what a disgrace it would have been to the social and judicial regulations of our country! But we thank God this barbarous practice is scarcely known to exist at present among any class of our citizens. Law and justice are now everywhere administered according to established forms, which guarantee to private individuals, as well as to the government at large, that security and freedom which are essential to the welfare and prosperity of any people.

Agnes, as we have seen, who was afterward joined by Maggy, was an eye-witness to that terrible delusion which was well-nigh causing a human being to lose his life. We will not attempt to describe the feelings of these two sorrowful females, which every succeeding step of the fearful tragedy that was about to be enacted was calculated to render more deep and absorbing. The melancholy sight at last became truly painful, and Agnes was just about to turn her eyes away from the disgusting picture when the boy so suddenly and so strangely found his way to the platform from which the accused victim was to drop into eternity. At first she was at a loss to understand the movement of the venturesome youth, and was disposed to believe that it proceeded altogether from a spirit of mischief or bravado, resorted to for the mere purpose of gratifying a vain wish to render himself conspicuous. But in a moment afterward she was convinced that the boy was endeavoring to discharge some serious task intimately connected with the fate of the poor prisoner who stood half dead below him; and what rendered the scene ten times more interesting was, that the lad who was acting such a wonderful part was no other than her quondam acquaintance, Molton Fairview, who on board the ship in which they sailed together to California had attracted so much of her attention and had elicited so much of her favor.

"In the name of wonders!" said she to Maggy, as soon



as she had a distinct view of the boy mounted on the platform, and stretching forward his deprecating hands to the crowd that stood before him, "is not that Molton Fairview? is not that the boy who came so near losing his life at Mr. Marshfield's funeral, and with whom we formed such an intimate acquaintance before reaching this place? Either it is he, or my eyes most strangely deceive me."

"It is he! it is he!" replied Maggy; "and bless me, how he seems to be pleading for the poor man's life! But let him be on his guard. There is room for another on that gallows besides the miserable wretch whose part he seems to be so seriously taking."

"Hush!" exclaimed Agnes, "they will not injure the boy—they dare not do so. It would be adding a load to the guilt already incurred that would be too heavy even for them to bear. But now he is done—and mark the effect he has produced on the minds of those fierce barbarians. So far from wishing to murder the boy, they seem really at a loss to know what to do with their prisoner."

It was just while Agnes was uttering these words that the poor victim of violence was conducted away in the manner we have seen, and made his escape, in company with Molton Fairview, through the crowd.

When Mr. Stanley returned in the evening from having made the inquiries concerning Alfred Russell, the result of which Agnes was impatiently waiting to know, she saw at once from his countenance that the intelligence he was about to communicate was not likely to be the most cheerful and satisfactory. "I have been unable," said he, "to obtain any direct information in regard to the recent movements of your brother. The person with whom he lodged some time ago has changed his occupation as a landlord, and has gone to some of the mining districts in search of gold. It is pretty certain, however, that your brother, before that change took place, was fully restored to the possession of his accustomed health. When his landlord forsook San Francisco it is supposed that he pursued the same course; and from the best reports I can obtain on the subject, he also either went to one of the mining districts, for the purpose of mending his fortune, or is now residing in Sacramento City."

This information, although it gave almost certain assur-



ance to Agnes that her brother's health was restored, left her mind entirely undecided in regard to his present location and his present pursuits. Nor had she any satisfactory impression of the course she ought to pursue herself. If her brother still remained in California, she was fully persuaded that it was her duty to go in search of him, or to try and give him notice of her arrival, and the circumstances under which she was placed in San Francisco. But how to find him out, or, if found out, how to effect an interview or correspondence with him, were considerations very difficult to solve in her own mind.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

It must not be forgotten that at the period embracing the particulars of our eventful history, the government of California, in many of its most desirable features, was weak and inefficient in securing her citizens the possession of their legal rights. An adventurous and miscellaneous population, flowing in from all parts of the habitable globe—with different dispositions, manners, and capacities—with but one ruling love and desire, which was to amass sudden and immoderate fortunes—with the demon of selfishness haunting all the marts and thoroughfares of business, and urging each individual to regard his own exclusive interests supremely—scattered over a wide surface of country, and forming a community of limited strength and numbers—without order, without organization, and almost without religion—such a population could hardly be expected submissively to obey the laws, or to live and work together except by coming into frequent collisions and conflicts. For the quieting and decision of these conflicts there was found to be no effectual tribunal; and when it was discovered that justice was measured out unequally, each member of the community was disposed to erect a tribunal of justice within his own bosom, and to act from his own crude and imperfect ideas of what constituted right. The consequence was, of course, that the utmost



disorder, so far as regarded the adjudication of individual disputes, prevailed throughout the whole country, and more especially in the mining districts. Each individual asserted that to be law which favored his own wishes or his own interests—the rights of innocent parties were recklessly invaded and sacrificed—and the victory was awarded to the strongest rather than to the most meritorious and most virtuous.

But it was impossible that such a state of things should continue to exist long without leading to the rankest anarchy, unless opposed by some check sufficiently strong to awe the contending parties into restraint and submission. Such a check was found in the summary administration of what was popularly styled Lynch-law, a remedy in itself almost as dangerous, and in some instances quite as cruel and unjust, as the great evil of plunder and aggression from which it proposed to relieve the people. One of the consequences of such a policy was what we have just seen, an exercise of usurped power, and an unavoidable tendency to run into cruelty and extravagance.

For the purpose of reforming an existing evil of such immense magnitude, and of placing the people of California under an administration of justice which, though only assumed and private, would have a tendency to counteract the abuses we have mentioned, some of the most prominent citizens entered into a confederacy to enforce law and order, as far as possible, under their own immediate supervision and sanction. Violence and plunder were prohibited under the severest penalties—the rights of possession to particular locations for mining purposes were sacredly respected—and individual property was thus secured from violation in the hands of its possessors. One of the objects which Mr. Stanley had in visiting California was to attach himself to this corps of private rulers, and to exhort the people residing in different districts to a reformation of their social life,—a step he was invited to pursue by some of his friends who had preceded him in this work, and whose labors were known to have a most salutary effect on the habits and disposition of the people. Captain Lamberton himself had contrived to become a member of this committee of reform, and government winked at an establishment which, although disorderly in itself,



seemed to be necessary to the safety and tranquillity of the country.

When Billy Braxton (for we are still disposed to call him by a name which was more familiar to his old friends of the neighborhood of Courtland Hall than any other) separated from Percy Courtland at the billiard-saloon, he proceeded immediately to the counting-room of Captain Lamberton, which was situated in a remote part of the city, and which formed the appendage of a building of much larger size, but of uncouth proportions, where Captain Lamberton transacted a pretty extensive business. As soon as this latter person saw Braxton, although there was no one present with him at the time, he beckoned him to follow to a more interior apartment leading into the main building, which was a kind of box or crypt that seemed designed for secret business, and which was so dark that the two individuals when together could with difficulty distinguish each other's features. Lamberton drew Braxton toward him, and shut the door behind.

"And so Marshfield is dead," said the Captain, "and she has arrived in safety without him? But you say she has other companions—a clergyman and his daughter, and a maid who constantly waits on her?"

"As to the clergyman," said Braxton, "he is not a regular preacher, but is, as you know, on the committee of reform, and will, perhaps, to-morrow set out for the interior."

"Yes; his name is Stanley," said Lamberton. "He is not likely to give us any trouble. I was informed of his proposed visit some time ago. But there is Percy Courtland—we have ten thousand times more reason to fear him. Is it not strange that he should have been in the same ship with us all the way from New York, and we not be apprised of the fact? Why, if I had received the least notice of his sailing along with us, I should have been almost ready to contrive some method to pitch him overboard. He must be looked to."

"I think we shall get rid of him, too," said Braxton, "without the danger of much annoyance. He has already started for the mines."

"That is capital!" exclaimed his companion. "Precisely what I could have wished for if I had been consulted



in the matter myself. Of course he does not know that she has arrived, and they are both ignorant of each other's movements? Now let me see. Alfred Russell has likewise disappeared, and some even go so far as to say that he sailed in the last steamer for the City of New York. As to the maid, she is but a weak, silly girl, and I have nothing to fear from her. Is it not remarkable, my dear Braxton, that everything seems to favor my wishes so exactly? But this Percy Courtland may, after all, be possessed of some qualities which, if drawn out by a knowledge of the circumstances with which we ourselves are acquainted, might cause us no little embarrassment. He must be looked to, Braxton. You understand me."

"Certainly I do," replied Braxton, "and I pledge my word to you, captain, that if he gets beyond the reach of my immediate observation it will not be with my own consent."

"You are right, Braxton—you are a good fellow!" answered Lamberton. "And henceforth it only remains that I should make my arrangements to visit Miss Russell. But it would not be proper for me to do so to-day. She must have a little time to rest, and to recover from her disappointment in not meeting her brother as she expected. I will call on her to-morrow. In the mean while, my dear Braxton, do not be out of reach, should I conclude in my mind, before making the expected visit, that I stand in need of your services."

At that moment a slight tap with the finger was made on the outside of the only pane of glass that lit up this secret domicile, on which Captain Lamberton immediately remarked,—

"I am wanted there on business. Remain here for a few minutes, and then pass silently through the counting-room, and no one will know that we have been closeted together in this secret apartment."

Braxton continued to remain where he was, agreeably to the instructions so cautiously given to him by his companion. Then straining his eyes through the pane of glass, as if half afraid he was left behind for some sinister purpose, "That man," said he to himself, after a short pause, "is a scoundrel, and he confidently believes that I am of his own character. God knows how often I have been



almost persuaded to believe that myself. I have spent one part of my life as Billy Braxton—as the poor witless fool who was half-pitied and half-despised for his simplicity—as an indolent loafer who, like Samson, was fed and caressed for the purpose of making sport for his revilers—as a knave placed at the tables of the idle and affluent, in order to receive the charitable reward of meat and drink for every contemptible jest I uttered. That was a temptation which I despised from my heart, but which I found it almost impossible to resist. But now I am beset by other temptations—by the alluring prospect of rising to eminence in the world—by the glitter of wealth and power—by the expectation of regaining that position in society which my indolence and weakness so carelessly forfeited. I am invited to become a scoundrel like the man who has just left me, and the evil one offers me all the kingdoms of the earth if I will but fall down and worship him. What a terrible struggle to be left suspended in choice between good and evil—between integrity and contempt—between the plaudits of a clear conscience and the fear of sinking into neglect and obscurity. When I was nothing but poor Billy Braxton the combat was carried on against my intellect—now that I am aspiring to be something greater it is waged against my heart. But in either case I am bound to fight it out—and in either case God knows the battle must be a severe one!”

Having thus soliloquized, Braxton silently withdrew from the shadowy light of the apartment to which he had been conducted, and passed through the counting-room which he had crossed a few minutes before. But he was surprised to find that it was again utterly deserted. Neither Captain Lamberton nor any other human being was to be seen within its limits.

“It is even so,” thought Braxton, as he passed out into the open street, and mingled with the busy crowd engaged in the struggle and excitement of business; “I verily believe this man is half ashamed or half afraid to own me as an equal companion, and hence contrives that we shall not be seen together even by those who are his clerks and assistants in the transaction of his suspicious schemes of trade and speculation. I am only valued according to his hopes of making me accessory to a measure by which he



expects to advance his own sensual ease and enjoyment, at the expense of depriving a virtuous and innocent individual—a high-minded and accomplished young lady—of all earthly happiness.”

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### CHAPTER XXX.

THE next morning Captain Lamberton repaired early to his counting-room, for the purpose of giving some special instructions to those who were more immediately engaged in his service. He had not been there long before a boy introduced himself into the apartment, and made some inquiries about obtaining employment. At first the captain paid little attention to the boy's application, and proceeded in turning over the pages of one of his folio ledgers without bestowing on him the least notice. The boy stood a minute or two waiting for an answer, but finding that he was entirely overlooked and neglected, he had already turned on his heels, and started to leave the premises, when Lamberton looking up, and casting his eyes after him, immediately called him back.

“I would judge, my boy,” said the captain, “that your proud spirit vastly exceeds the amount of money in your pocket. But I do not wonder at it, since, if I am not mistaken, I believe I behold in you the same wonderful youth who yesterday cheated the crowd out of a victim whom they had prepared for the gallows.”

“I understand you, sir,” said our acquaintance, Molton Fairview; “I am that same person.”

“And what are you able to do,” asked his interrogator, “supposing I felt an inclination to take you into my service?”

“I could improve my handwriting a little,” observed Molton, “and fit myself I hope for some station by which I would be able to make myself useful, and raise a little money at the same time.”

“Very good!” said Captain Lamberton—“and I suppose the making money would be your principal object?”



"It ought not to be," answered Molton. "But I have a mother"—here he turned away his head and paused, as if at a loss to know how to proceed further in his discourse.

Captain Lamberton seemed to labor under a momentary embarrassment himself, and hesitated some time before making any further answer. At length rousing himself, as if a sudden thought had just passed through his mind—"I think I have it," he exclaimed, "but I must first learn a little more of your former pursuits and engagements. What is your name?"

"Molton Fairview," answered the boy.

"And where did you come from, and how were you employed before you concluded to seek your fortune in California?"

"I was employed as a newsboy in the City of New York," said Molton—"but I have a mother, and that employment did not yield us any very great profit."

"But I presume it helped to sharpen your wits," replied the captain, "although I can scarcely hope that it served much to mend your morals. I am at a greater loss to know how you found your way to this country, seeing you were poor, and in all probability destitute of the means of providing for your passage."

"That provision," said Molton, "was made by a gentleman under whose protection I was permitted to sail, and in whose company I landed in this city. He is about to proceed to some of the mines, and he gave me the choice of remaining behind, and seeking my fortune in my own way."

"Very well," observed Captain Lamberton; "but perhaps it would be as well, after all, that you too should visit the mines for the present, until it shall be in my power to provide some employment for you which will suit your taste and disposition better. As I said just now, I have the scheme in my head, and I think it will answer."

Here the captain took Molton aside, where their conversation could not be so well overheard by the different individuals who were employed by him in the counting-room, and commenced giving him a detailed account of the duties he should expect him to perform at the par-



ticular point to which he intended sending him. The great object of his mission, however, amounted simply to this,—Molton was to go to the Mokelumne mines, for the purpose of making inquiries about and watching the movements of Percy Courtland, who, as Captain Lamberton had been informed that very morning, was either engaged in mining operations connected with that particular district, or had some other employment in the immediate neighborhood. The captain, being considered in the world as a shrewd man himself, had little difficulty in discovering the sharpness of our young adventurer Molton Fairview, and soon came to the conclusion that he was the very person to discover and put him in possession of the information he required.

After this had been concluded on, Lamberton prepared for his contemplated visit to Agnes Russell. In his endeavors to promote this scheme according to his preconceived notions on the subject, his mind was necessarily brought to a state of much embarrassment. In his first efforts to disclose to her the object he had in view, he was well aware that he would expose himself at once to the charge of baseness and treachery. It was true that he harbored no design of attacking her virtue, or of imposing on her confidence and credulity. He was sincerely desirous of wooing her as his wife, and his intention was to convince her of this desire with strict ingenuousness and candor. All his schemes had for their end this one object. It was for this object alone that he had operated on the mind of Mr. Marshfield, who was at first entirely ignorant of his purpose, so as to induce him, in connection with Braxton, to persuade Agnes to visit California. It was for this purpose too that he had tried to deceive and mislead Percy Courtland, whose feelings were embittered by him against his father and his brother, and whose prospects of advancement in the City of New York were mainly frustrated through his instrumentality. It was for this reason too that he was trying to make a tool of Braxton, and believed him to be entirely wedded to his interests. And for the same purpose he was now making inquiries after Percy Courtland, in order that he might, if possible, avoid his interference in a matter so important to his wishes. But he very well knew that not one of



these schemes could be justified on the score of either honor, fairness, or the ordinary civilities that are due from one fellow-being to another. And what caused him no little uneasiness was, that he was strongly convinced in his own mind that Agnes Russell had received direct information from more than one source of the cruel machinations he had practiced against her dearest friends, and of the objects he had in view in decoying her from home, and bringing her, friendless and helpless, to be confronted by his unreasonable persecutions in a land of strangers. He had not forgotten the letter which, in an unguarded moment, he had written to Billy Braxton, and which he saw it was possible that individual might make known to the very person who, above all others, he would not wish to see it. No wonder that he should feel greatly perplexed in seeking an interview, the result of which he had so much reason to believe would turn out unfavorable to his plans and wishes. But, like most desperate men, he relied more on a blind chance for success than on any just prospect of accomplishing his purposes in reason. He accordingly resolved to execute his scheme with boldness, and not readily to relinquish his purpose, even if he should meet with the most decided opposition in the first instance.

Agnes had been speaking to her companion, Maggy, in a tone that was at once tender and dignified. Mr. Stanley and his daughter had just called to bid them farewell, as it was absolutely necessary for the former to visit Sacramento in a few days, in order to attend the approaching convention, and he had business to see after in other districts fully sufficient to occupy his time until it should be necessary for him to appear in that city.

"We have spent but one night in California," said Agnes to Maggy, "and I must confess that night to me has been a long and dreary one. I cannot but realize the peculiar difficulties attending our situation, and the hardships to which we may be exposed before we can reasonably hope for relief. Mr. Marshfield, the only sure friend in whom I could confide, is dead, and my brother has disappeared from the country, or, if still remaining in the neighborhood, is at present beyond our reach. The happening of these two contingencies has rendered our situa-



tion mournful and precarious. But we must not lose heart, Maggy. Let us endeavor to believe that God will raise us up friends. For the present it will be necessary for us to remain where we are, until we shall receive some certain tidings from my brother, or until some other event shall transpire to convince us what course it will be best for us to pursue."

Maggy had no time to reply to these remarks before a slight tap was heard at the door of the apartment, and the landlord announced to Agnes, Captain Lamberton. This announcement seemed to surprise Maggy a good deal, but it was heard by Agnes without occasioning her any striking signs of alarm or trepidation. It was, indeed, but a visit that she had been anticipating since her first arrival in San Francisco, and which she now received with so much composure that Captain Lamberton himself was somewhat astonished at her firmness.

"I hope, Miss Russell," he proceeded to say, as soon as he found himself seated, "that my visit will be received by you kindly, as I have no doubt you must believe it proceeds from the best of motives."

"It is difficult for me to judge of your motives, Captain Lamberton," replied Agnes; "but our slight acquaintance heretofore is scarcely a sufficient apology for your present visit, unless you have some special reason for doing me that honor."

"I am well aware," said the captain, "that you have felt disappointed in not meeting with your brother in this place, who would have been your natural protector; more especially as you were so sadly deprived by the way of the friendship and support of Mr. Marshfield. Nothing, I am sure, would give me greater pleasure than to make up that loss in my own person."

"That loss, I trust," said Agnes, "will be supplied from a source in which I can repose more confidence, and from which I may hope for more consolation."

"Pardon me, Miss Russell," returned Captain Lamberton, "but I really cannot understand you. Your language would seem to indicate that I had either done you some serious injury already, or that I meditate its perpetration at some future time. Now, I am sure, if I comprehend my own intentions, that my sole design in visiting you



this morning has been to do you a kindness, rather than expose you to the slightest danger or difficulty."

"It pains me to say," answered Agnes, "that I am not exactly of the same opinion. I am, indeed, almost friendless so far as regards my dependence on earthly support. I have been induced—induced mainly by yourself, perhaps—to expose my person to the dangers of a perilous voyage—to endure hardships and sorrow—to separate myself thousands of miles from those who are near and dear to me—to cast my lot under the most trying circumstances among perfect strangers—to brave calamity and insult, with no one but this poor girl, as weak and defenseless as myself, to stand by and console me. I have encountered all this, and suffered it all, and far more serious difficulties and sorrows may still await me. Yes, God knows how much I feel the want of earthly comfort and consolation,—but I crave it not from you,—I fly not for refuge to one who, I have reason to believe, will deceive and betray me. Oh, Captain Lamberton!" she exclaimed, rising from her chair, and regarding him with a countenance which was at once benignant and determined, "you have just said that you came here this morning to do me a kindness. I seek not to know what your intended kindness is. But this I will say,—and say it from the bottom of my heart—say it with an earnestness and sincerity which I hope you will excuse,—that the greatest kindness you can do me this morning will be at once to leave this apartment."

Captain Lamberton had seen some dangers in the course of his life, and was by no means destitute of that courage and nerve which frequently serve men in their greatest extremities. But on the present occasion his firmness seemed to forsake him. He bit his lips in anguish—perhaps in remorse of heart—and colored to the very brows. Agnes crossed over to the other side of the room, folded her arms, and, regardless of her visitor, stood looking out at the window. At length the captain rose and exclaimed,—with more warmth, perhaps, than he at first intended,—

"Such treatment as this is insupportable—it is insulting to the individual against whom it is directed—it is more than a gentleman ought to put up with even from



female whim and petulance. But I will try to be calm. I will try to think that the heart of Agnes Russell never intended to express what her unguarded language would seem to imply."

As he spoke these words, Maggy very significantly opened the door of the apartment, and stood with the latch in her hand, as if impatient of his delay, and bluntly inviting his departure. This conduct on the part of the maid the captain was disposed to consider as an aggravation of the insult he had already received from her mistress. He passed her with a sullen and menacing aspect. But neither Maggy nor Agnes showed him any further attention. They suffered him to depart in silence, and the moment he got outside the door, the former closed it impatiently after him.

When he had gone, Agnes came forward, and said to her companion, "That man, Maggy, may give your poor mistress some trouble. But I cannot treat him otherwise than I have done—otherwise than I think he deserves."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Maggy, "I think you treated him only too kind, and ought to have been at quits with him at once. I watched the creature from the beginning, and saw that there was no good likely to come out of him. I only wonder where he got the assurance to become your defender, when his assistance was never asked for, and we scarcely knew there was such a being as himself in existence. For my part, I am sure that I never thought of meeting him in this place; and I believe if it had not been for your own sake, I would have shown him the door in much less time than it took him to come over all the fine things we heard him parade before us this morning."

"We must not be rude, Maggy," said Agnes, "even to those who would do us an injury, although I am sore afraid that my own conduct might have been somewhat more civil toward Captain Lamberton. But," she continued, as if apologizing to herself for treatment on her part which she found it almost impossible to avoid, "how is the mind to preserve its proper temper when the heart is breaking under a deep sense of its loneliness and sorrow, and when you have reason to believe that the individual who professes to sympathize with you in your misfortunes



is your greatest enemy, and is seeking to betray you with a kiss? Oh, how hard it is to bear both the sorrows and the insults of the world at the same time! How exceedingly difficult it is to exercise a mild and gentle temper, when you are sensible of being surrounded by hypocritical enemies, who, in the name of humanity and mercy, are seeking to injure you, in order to gratify their own cruel selfishness! I must confess that my poor, wounded heart is almost too feeble for such fierce and trying temptations." Here Agnes turned for a moment from Maggy, and, in the bitterness of her grief, poured forth a torrent of tears. They seemed to come to her relief, and in a short time afterward she recovered her usual calmness and serenity.

Captain Lamberton fled in haste from the apartment of Miss Russell, and sought an interview with his companion, Billy Braxton. His feelings had been wrought up to a degree of exasperation which it was impossible for him to keep concealed within his own bosom. "Disdainful, affected prude," he kept saying to himself, as he passed along the public thoroughfares leading from the hotel down to the water's side,—“miserable minion of a misguided feeling, which she is determined nothing shall correct, because nothing is dearer to her than the gratification of her own headstrong will,—either you or I must become wearied in a chase which I am resolved shall go forward from this very moment. We start together to-day, and it will go hard but that the wreath shall adorn my own brow ere you have time to reach the proposed goal. The impudent upstart—the incorrigible fool—I will teach her that there are other hearts as sensitive and as headstrong as her own!"

While indulging in such reflections as these, Captain Lamberton arrived at a steamboat landing, where he found Braxton busy in fitting out Molton Fairview for his intended trip to Sacramento City. "Let the boy go without further instructions," said he to Braxton. "I have put him in possession of his commission, and I am convinced that he has wit enough to execute it without any additional interference on your part." Then, leading Braxton aside, he continued: "I have seen her, and have been spurned from her presence—ay, have been indignantly banished from her apartment with disdain and



contempt. The proud-hearted vixen—the infatuated dunce—she is weak enough to suppose that I may be corrected like a truant school-boy—that I may be mocked, beaten, and trampled upon like the slave of some cruel tyrant who is begging for his life! But I am determined she shall know better—that she shall become more thoroughly acquainted with the meanness of her feminine audacity, and the dignity of my own character. Let her look to it! It will be my turn to threaten and torture hereafter!”

“I hope it will be hereafter,” said Braxton, “for really, Captain Lamberton, you hardly appear to know what you are saying at present. Your disturbed temper seems to have run away with your judgment.”

“What, sir!” cried Captain Lamberton, “am I to be lectured and hooted at by a foolish girl, and not stop to vindicate my own manhood? What would you have me do?”

“I would have you to be calm, for one thing,” answered Braxton, “the rest will follow of itself.”

“But I won’t be calm! I can’t be calm!” cried the captain. “I have been wronged, and it is only right that I should seek for redress!”

“Then seek it in a proper manner,” said Braxton. “Do not let your haste outrun the accomplishment of your purpose.”

“The tortured worm may writhe in agony,” continued the captain, “without the possibility of opposition or revenge. But I am not a worm, to be plagued and trampled upon with impunity.”

“Nor are you a lion,” returned Braxton, “to rend your prey on the least show of provocation. Why, look you, captain, this same Agnes Russell, after all, may be ten times more gentle, and fifty times more tractable, than you take her to be. You are surely doing yourself a great injury by regarding that as an affront which was only meant as an invitation to further importunity. Do not despair at the first repulse, but try the experiment over again, always bearing in mind the old saying, that a faint heart never gained a fair lady.”

“Good sir!” replied the captain, “would you have me to fall down at the feet of one who is not only supercilious



and haughty, but who is grossly insulting both in her language and manners? Would you have me kiss the rod that is used without justice and without mercy?"

"I would just have you act and feel," answered Braxton, "as other men would do on such occasions. You must make your cunning an offset against her own rashness, and bring your more deliberate judgment to correct her inconsiderate impetuosity."

"That is," said Lamberton, "I must misconstrue the plain meaning of her language, deny the truth and sincerity of her professed feelings, and shut my eyes to the rigor and expression of her inflamed countenance. In other words, I must believe she is a heartless hypocrite in the midst of her tears and lamentations, and notwithstanding the warmth and earnestness of her protestations to the contrary."

"Just so," replied Braxton. "All sensible lovers of our own sex pursue a course like this, and why should you not do the same? Try it for a season at least, and if the result should disappoint your expectations, you will in the end be no worse off than you are at present."

"Well! well!" said the captain, "your counsel sounds less unreasonable to me now than it would have done an hour ago. I will endeavor, my dear Braxton, to follow your advice, although I must confess that I entertain great doubts of its ultimate result."

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

WE have already intimated that as soon as Captain Lamberton withdrew from the apartment of Miss Russell, the feelings of that young lady became overwhelmed in the deepest anguish. While she began to see more and more clearly the dark designs of a man who, notwithstanding his heartlessness and treachery, endeavored to make her believe that he was her sincerest benefactor and friend, she could not but become painfully sensible of her own destitution and loneliness. And what



hope could she entertain of freeing herself from the unfortunate situation in which she was placed? All the information she was able to obtain concerning her brother was so vague and indistinct that it was entirely insufficient to flatter her wishes, or give her any certain assurance of the course she ought to pursue in order to discover his wanderings. She had, indeed, seen Percy Courtland, and had reason to believe that he had found employment somewhere in the neighborhood, but there were many considerations of a delicate nature that she found it impossible to overlook, sufficient in themselves, as she believed, to prevent her from making known her situation to him, even if it had been in her power. Neither could any certain dependence be placed on Mr. Stanley, as that gentleman had business in other parts to look to, which exclusively demanded his whole attention for the present, and which necessarily deprived her of the society of himself and his daughter. These were circumstances that might well have distressed a stouter heart than that possessed by Agnes Russell.

In addition to this, the apartment in the hotel occupied by herself and Maggy, when taken in connection with the unprotected situation in which she was left, was calculated to cast a still deeper gloom over her mind and spirits. She was not aware that any other females were inmates of the hotel but themselves. Their meals were served up in their own lodging-room, and the landlord was almost the only person who came within reach of them during the day. Besides, they were exposed to the noise and confusion, not to say the blackguardism and profanity, which were distinctly heard from the adjoining billiard-room. No wonder that the mind of Agnes Russell was ready to droop and give way under circumstances so melancholy and discouraging. Even Maggy herself would fall into temporary fits of low spirits, which it required all the energy and good nature of her mistress to dispel.

In the course of the afternoon which succeeded the memorable visit made by Captain Lamberton to the apartment in the hotel occupied by Agnes and her companion, the former, in order perhaps to give some employment and repose to her mind after the violent exercise it had undergone in the morning, was occupied in overhauling the contents of a moderate-sized trunk, which constituted the



entire wardrobe belonging to the two females. Maggy sat on a chair at some distance from her kind mistress, occasionally glancing through the window at the passengers who were parading the streets below, but oftener casting her eyes in melancholy silence on the floor, and sometimes stealthily applying a handkerchief she held in her hands to her eyes, as if wiping away a moisture which she was unwilling should be noticed by her mistress.

"You are sad this afternoon, Maggy," said Agnes, assuming an air of cheerfulness which by no means accorded with the feelings of her heavy heart—"you are sad this afternoon, and I can plainly perceive are indulging in melancholy reflections. But cheer up, my girl. This must not be. You are the only human being to keep me in countenance under my present troubles, and should you fail or desert me, I am afraid my own weak heart would sink under the weight of its increasing sorrows."

"Do not fear me," answered Maggy, rousing herself from the deep reverie into which she had unconsciously fallen—"do not fear me, Miss Agnes. I may, indeed, be brought to grieve a little sometimes, which I hope you will be ready and willing to forgive; but as to deserting you, that you know can never, never happen. I have just been going back in my fancy to the occupations and pleasures of Courtland Hall. I was thinking of its beautiful fields and flowers—of its rich pastures—of its plentiful fruits—of its charming walks—and of the many delightful employments which you and I were almost daily engaged in. I was recalling the times when you, and Percy, and the rest of them used to be so gay and cheerful, and I could not help thinking how much happier we were then than we are now. But after all it was but a kind of day-dream which I think will not often disturb my fancy, for you taught me long ago that our truest happiness consists in doing good, and I think if I can only serve you as I ought to do, I shall enjoy a peaceful and happy mind here, if even deprived of my former blessings."

It now became Miss Russell's turn to shed tears, which she was forced to do in spite of her own efforts to cheer the drooping spirits of her companion. Maggy had touched on a chord which at once responded to the language and images of her simple and feeling address. But her mis-



tress soon rallied. "It is true," said Agnes, "we have forfeited the brightest and purest joys of our lives—the kindness of friends—the exquisite delights of domestic happiness—but as you say, Maggy, if we are but brought to tread in the path of duty, our enjoyments may still be great, and our peace hereafter, whether in this world or in the world to come, will be proportioned to our present sufferings."

At the moment she uttered these words her eyes were attracted to the small looking-glass, which we have had occasion to mention above as being suspended over the aperture communicating with the adjoining billiard-saloon, and which was now visibly put in motion by a force applied to it from the opposite side. This force seemed to be exerted two or three times, as if on purpose to attract the attention of those who occupied the apartment; and immediately afterward a folded note, addressed to Miss Agnes Russell, was seen to drop on the table that stood under the glass. Agnes stepped to the table and took up the note, which she found to read as follows:

"The treachery which you suspect from a certain quarter is real, but do not manifest too much alarm on the subject. It will be your best course at present to behave toward your persecutor with mildness, temper, and affability, and even to comply with his wishes in everything that may not seem to be unreasonable. The time for your liberation and triumph will come hereafter, and will be hastened by him who now subscribes himself

"YOUR UNKNOWN FRIEND."

The mind of Agnes was not a little agitated on reading this brief but extraordinary note. From what source could it have emanated, and who was the person who had sufficient power to deliver her from the threatened dangers by which she was surrounded? That the persecutor alluded to could mean no other person than Captain Lamberton she did not pretend to entertain the least doubt; and yet how was she sure that this professed readiness to befriend and deliver her was not a part of that very treachery which was so positively pronounced to exist against her, and that the whole scheme might have been got up by Lamberton



himself for the purpose of lulling her into a dangerous security? She examined the handwriting with the utmost carefulness and scrutiny, but without being able to discover that it corresponded in any manner with that of her brother or of Percy Courtland, the only persons who were the most likely to exert themselves in her behalf. With the writings of Lamberton and Braxton she did not pretend to be acquainted, and therefore it was out of her power to form any judgment on the subject so far as regarded those gentlemen. And yet, on a little more reflection, she did not think it impossible but that the note might have been written by the latter individual. She remembered the hints that he himself had given of the assistance he might some day or other be able to render her, and the injunction Mr. Marshfield had laid on her to be guided by his counsels. The recollection of these circumstances made a deep impression on her mind, and perhaps was the principal reason why she so freely disclosed her perplexity on the occasion to Maggy. She first read the note to this warm-hearted and affectionate girl, and then remarked on it as follows:

“I cannot possibly tell who is the author of these lines. I am persuaded they were not written by my brother, or by Percy Courtland. Do you think, Maggy, they could have been written by Captain Lamberton?”

“I do not pretend to much scholarship, as you know,” replied Maggy, “nor have I always the best judgment in determining who may do this, or who may do that. But, so far as regards the matter now before us, I should hardly think these lines were written by Captain Lamberton. I believe he never would have written them unless in some way or other he expected to receive for his trouble an immediate and certain benefit. This, however, cannot be the case. From the knowledge he has of your ladyship’s disposition, I don’t see how he could expect to be much benefited by this note himself, or how he could have calculated on its doing you any very serious injury.”

A moment’s reflection seemed to convince Agnes that there might be a great deal of truth in what Maggy said. “But,” she continued, “to whom am I to charge its authorship? Except those persons whose names I have already mentioned, I cannot think of any other individual



but one who would be at all likely to become interested in our fortunes, and that individual, I am afraid you will say, has neither the means nor the disposition to do so."

"Perhaps you mean Billy Braxton," said Maggy, who had learned casually from Agnes of this singular man's arrival in California. "Now, respecting this strange mortal, I scarcely know what to say. He has changed so entirely since he left the neighborhood of Courtland Hall, and has wrapped himself up in so much mystery, that, begging your pardon, Miss Agnes, I hardly know whether he be man, spirit, or demon. And yet I sometimes think (for I have not forgotten my old liking for Billy) that he may really be a much better person than we take him to be. I am sure, for my part, that I would by no means be surprised out of my senses if this same strange creature should one day or other prove our friend. And now, as I am just reminded, I have some recollection of this man's handwriting, for he often employed himself in copying what he called sentiments, and reading them whenever he had a chance of making them produce him a good dinner. Let me inspect the note with my own eyes."

Then, taking the paper into her hands, and viewing it attentively, she continued:

"Well, if this be Billy Braxton's handwriting, I think he must have taken some pains to improve it lately. His capital letters seem to be more gracefully formed, and don't lean half as much as they did when I used to pick up scraps of what he called his sentiments from the dinner-table. But this twist in the double *f* is very much like his, and so is the shape of the *r*, which he always made plainer, I guess, than most gentlemen who consider themselves good clerks. And then I see that he sometimes neglects to dot his *i*'s, which is just what he always did when he was writing for the farmers in the country, and which I used to tell him looked very much like his own crooked powder-horn when he had no stopper to it. I can't say for certain, Miss Agnes, but I am sure there is nothing here which flatly contradicts the handwriting of our old friend Billy Braxton."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Agnes, "for I feel a very strong inclination to follow the advice contained in this paper."



Agnes felt some concern in regard to the contents of the note conveyed in the manner we have mentioned from the billiard-room into her own apartment; but after mature reflection she came to the conclusion that her safest course would be to respect it as a communication dictated by the kindness of a friend, and to be guided by its suggestions. She was confirmed in this resolution still more by the prying curiosity of Maggy, who, after being made acquainted with the secret aperture communicating between the two apartments, busied herself somewhat more than accorded with the approbation of her mistress in watching the motions of the parties on the opposite side, and reporting them, as if placed on guard to detail the manœuvres of an enemy. While engaged in making one of these reports to her mistress, she suddenly stopped short, uttered a low exclamation of surprise, and then applied her eyes with increased eagerness to the opening through which she had been before looking. "It is he!" she cried out at last; "I am as sure of it as if he was talking to me in this very room."

"It is who?" asked Agnes, hastily, in return. "What is it, Maggy, that causes you so much surprise?"

"I saw him; I saw Billy Braxton," answered Maggy, "as plainly as I now see you before my eyes."

"That should not occasion you so much wonder," said Agnes. "I imagine that billiard-saloons, in a place like San Francisco, are not only the resort of those who make use of them for the low and selfish purpose of gambling, but frequently become the place of meeting of gentlemen who have no other object in view than to associate together for innocent amusement and recreation. Is he in the room still?" continued Agnes, "or did he only step in on some special occasion?"

"He but just looked into the room," said Maggy, "as if he was in search of somebody there, and then immediately went out again."

"I thought that might be the case," replied Agnes. "If I am not greatly mistaken, Billy Braxton is not a man to spend much of his time in billiard-saloons."

"I almost wish," said Maggy, "that he would spend less or more, for in that case I think there would not be



so much likelihood of his scaring poor bodies like me out of their senses."

The aperture communicating between the two apartments was now closed, by suspending the looking-glass in its place, which Agnes did the more readily, as she was really fearful that Maggy, by some injudicious movement, might attract the attention of persons of keen hearing and discernment on the other side.

This state of things continued until after night. Agnes and Maggy had already supped, and were sitting together in their silent apartment as lonely as if they were occupying the cell of a convent. But just in proportion to their own noiseless intercourse with each other was the uproar and confusion on the other side. Many voices seemed to be employed in loud and vehement altercation, and the tumult of licentiousness and profanity, uttered without the least regard to decency, gave great offense to those who were compelled to listen to it. At last the noise grew louder, and the crowd in the room seemed to lose all sense of propriety. It was evident that an extraordinary excitement existed in the apartment, and Agnes was not able to account for it, except by supposing that it proceeded from the madness of intoxication. In this idea she was confirmed a moment afterward by hearing two or three of the company staggering toward the very spot fronting the aperture communicating with her own lonely apartment. The ruffians were loud and furious in declaring their unmannerly intentions. "We want to see these two pretty birds," they exclaimed, "who have been peeping from their cages, and who seem to be so eager for other company. It is only fair that we should have an opportunity of hearing them whistle at least; and of beholding and admiring their beautiful feathers." In reply to these insane rantings, a voice was heard entreating them to desist from their rash purpose, and trying to reason them into a state of peace and quiet. But these sons of Belial seemed determined not to be kept in restraint. They only raved the more in return, asserting their own independence, and avowing their readiness to take the responsibility on their own shoulders. Other voices seemed to join in holding them back, but all to no purpose. At last a furious struggle was heard, as if the parties had closed with each other,



and were to the utmost of their power contending for victory. Maggy by this time became seriously alarmed, and was on the point of screaming out for assistance. But Agnes, although perhaps equally frightened, was able to preserve that calm self-possession which never forsook her under the most alarming emergency. "Not yet," she said; "they have not yet found their way into our apartment, and even if they should do so, there is every reason to believe that others will accompany them who will be our protectors."

Agnes had scarcely uttered these words when a loud shout, accompanied by a violent attack made on the wooden partition that separated the two apartments, evinced that the intruders were intent on accomplishing their object, and on entering by force into the private room occupied by the two females. A large space, surrounding the aperture over which the looking-glass was suspended, began to be sensibly affected, as if vibrating from the violent pressure that was made to bear against it from without. Presently a sudden crash rent the moving mass asunder, and another shout announced that the wild attack of the villains on the other side had been successful. It was seen now that a door, which once led from the billiard-saloon into Agnes's apartment, but which had been nailed up for the purpose of preventing all communication between the two in future, had been violently forced open, so as to admit the perpetrators of this shameful act to enter at once on the privacy of the terrified females who were waiting their coming.

Agnes stood erect, in the center of the room, resting her right hand on the shoulder of Maggy, who, by this time, had acquired more firmness, and courageously taken her position at the side of her mistress. The latter had exercised so much calmness in the midst of the danger which threatened her as deliberately to place a small table in an eligible situation of the apartment, behind which she and her companion intrenched themselves like soldiers abiding the breach of a fortified castle. As soon as the door was forced in the manner we have mentioned, Agnes had an opportunity of observing that a struggle was still kept up in the billiard-saloon, but she was too much occupied in attending to her own personal safety to understand either



its nature or tendency. She had enough to do to maintain her firmness at the post she had taken, and to await with calmness the issue of the terrible crisis in which she was involved.

She uttered not a word of terror or reproof at the beginning, but the moment the first ruffian had advanced to the center of the room, with a flushed countenance, but with dignified composure, and without the slightest tremor in her looks or voice, she demanded by what right he dared to disturb the privacy of two lone and defenseless females.

"By the same right," said the base aggressor, who had become somewhat sobered, perhaps, in the course of the close and warm conflict through which he had just passed, "by the same right that I freely use my eyes on all other occasions. I wanted to see your pretty faces, mistress, and as you know this California is an out-of-the-way place, and a lady's face is about as rare as a Sunday sermon, I am sure you will hardly begrudge us an opportunity of seeing a handsome countenance here when we have so little chance of seeing it anywhere else."

"Fool! impudent babbler, begone!" she exclaimed, placing her hand in her bosom, as if in the act of searching for something there,— "begone! or my own weak arm, if possible, will inflict on you an injury which all the world will justify, because all the world will see that I have done it in self-defense."

The man drew back as if half convinced that what he heard was a certain reality, and not the mere effect of his own excited imagination. He stared on Agnes with an incredulous countenance, and seemed to be somewhat conscious of the pitiful spectacle he presented to the eyes of all who now looked on him. The truth is, he was awed into humility and submission by that simple heroism which is so often the concomitant of female purity and virtue. Muttering something between his teeth about not having been in earnest, he was utterly unable to frame a suitable reply to the strong and fervent language made use of by the indignant female he came to insult, and falling back into the ranks of his companions, most of whom appeared to be as much awed by the courage and dignity of Agnes as he was himself, he gave indubitable evidence of a perfect will-



ingness on his part to relinquish his unenviable position at once to any one who might choose to assume it.

It was, perhaps, because one of his companions was less sobered, rather than because he possessed more firmness and courage, that he was about to return to the attack which had been so willingly abandoned by the other, and was in the act of adding additional insults to those which had already been so cruelly offered to the unprotected situation of the two heroic girls. But just at that moment a shout was raised in the adjoining apartment, the struggle which had been going on during a very considerable period suddenly ceased, and some one was heard to rush with great haste and precipitation toward the stairway leading from the billiard-saloon down to the street in front of the hotel. In another moment the door which entered from the main passage of the building into the room occupied by Agnes and her companion was opened, and Molton Fairview, springing to their side, proclaimed himself their guardian and protector. The applause and clapping which followed were immense. The ruffian who had meditated a second attack on the two females instantly shrunk from his purpose, as if ashamed or afraid to carry it into execution; the crowd retired into the adjoining room; the landlord entered to apologize to Agnes for what he said it had been out of his power to prevent, and peace again prevailed throughout the several apartments of the hotel.

If Agnes was terrified and annoyed by the brutal conduct of her half-besotted, half-demoniac visitors, she was no less surprised at the sudden appearance before her of Molton Fairview. His countenance manifested its usual good nature and frankness, but there seemed a sternness about it which she had never observed to the same extent before, and an expression of indignation and resentment, which plainly indicated that he had been a party to the recent excitement in the other room. As soon as Agnes had recovered a little from her surprise, she was about to address him, but, before she could find words to do so, he himself became the speaker.

"The cowardly scoundrels who caused you so much fear," said he, "have disappeared, and I, too, who ought to have been far from here before this time, must hasten away as soon as possible. I would have come to your



relief sooner if it had been in my power. I owe much to you, but I owe still more to my poor mother." Having uttered these words, he withdrew from the sight of the wondering females as suddenly as he had ushered himself into their presence.

Agnes was at a loss to comprehend the extent of an interference which had been as strange as it was unlooked for. Could it be possible that this boy, whose physical powers had not yet expanded to the growth of manhood—who appeared to be poor, impoverished, and perhaps neglected—whose entire dependence might be mainly or altogether on himself—could it be possible that he was singly engaged with the drunken knaves in the adjoining room; and, after having extricated himself from their violence and treachery, had still the courage and strength to come forward and defend Agnes and her companion in person in their own apartment? The supposition implied a degree of manliness and resolution, not to say of feeling and gallantry, which she could not but conceive to be wonderful in a youth of such tender years. She remembered, indeed, what Maggy had said of seeing Billy Braxton in the billiard-saloon. But the whole transaction appeared to her like a dream, and she was compelled to satisfy herself with the hope that at some future time she would be favored with a solution of the mystery.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

AFTER the uproar had ceased, and the parties to these scandalous proceedings had retired, the landlord took immediate measures to have the door as effectually secured again as it was at the beginning. Agnes, however, was dissatisfied. She begged that he would furnish her with another apartment, where she might be exposed to less noise, and enjoy greater security. But he protested that it was out of his power to do so. He said that every room in his house was occupied, and that she was in the enjoyment of one of the very best in the whole building.



Finding it, therefore, vain to expostulate, she was compelled to submit to the inconvenience without further complaint or repining.

When about to retire to rest, Maggy was not unmindful of the danger to which they had been exposed during the tumultuous interval we have just attempted to describe. "Although the door has been again nailed shut," said she to Agnes, "and our room is, perhaps, as secure as it was at first, yet I almost fear that something may happen during the darkness of the night. At any rate, we have no certain assurance of safety; and should ruffians again attempt to break into our apartment, you would hardly be able to scare them away a second time by pretending to feel for a dagger in your bosom, as there would not be light enough in the room to discover your movements. We must, therefore, try to find some other means of safety." So saying, she commenced erecting a barrier against further intrusion, not only by piling up chairs and tables against the door which had just been broken open, but by fortifying the one leading out to the passage in the same manner. While Agnes admired the caution, she could not help smiling at the simplicity of the innocent girl.

"Your design in barring out the miserable men whose behavior has already given us so much trouble," she observed to Maggy, "I cannot but approve of, since the very act of seeking for safety will inspire us with some hope at least that we have accomplished our purpose. But I must confess that I have but little confidence in schemes that are based on such props and defenses as these. Our best security must exist within our own bosoms—I mean the security involved in the indignant rebuke which virtue is always capable of inflicting on vice. That, after all, I have reason to believe, constituted our principal defense, and our ultimate triumph, in the contest from which we have just escaped. The boy, indeed, was of service to us at the close of the struggle, and perhaps was of material benefit to us in the adjoining room. But I am seriously inclined to believe that it was his calm and stern defiance, joined with our own, that was the principal means of gaining us the final conquest."

"I must confess," said Maggy, "that I am disposed to



believe the same thing; but, notwithstanding, I will pile up these chairs and tables, if it be only for the sake of giving a solemn alarm to the cowardly knaves, if any such there be, who should a second time attempt to enter our silent apartment."

"And I will cheerfully assist you in your labors," said Agnes, "though not, perhaps, with precisely the same views."

So saying, they both became earnestly engaged in fortifying the insecure citadel they occupied, and having performed this task they retired to rest. But we are not aware that anything further occurred to disturb them during that night.

The next morning Agnes continued to feel the loneliness and destitution of herself and companion, although she thought it more prudent, on Maggy's account, to conceal her gloomy thoughts, and to put on a show of tranquillity and courage foreign to the state of her own heart. She had forwarded a letter addressed to her brother at Sacramento City, more, however, with the view of discharging what she considered a simple duty, than with the hope of receiving an answer to her inquiries. She had, moreover, caused the landlord of the hotel to institute a search in every direction likely to lead to information concerning his whereabouts, but without receiving intelligence from any quarter that was satisfactory to her anxious wishes. These disappointments, together with a deep sense of her isolation from the busy world around her, and of her unprotected situation, amid entire strangers, might well have preyed on feelings far less sensitive than those which entered into the constitution of poor Agnes Russell. No wonder she experienced a weight at her heart, that required the utmost good sense and fortitude to bear with equanimity and patience. But we have seen throughout the course of this narrative that she possessed a mind of no ordinary strength and ability, and that she exercised a trust in a Higher Power, on whom she relied with undoubting confidence.

Conscious of possessing that sure support to which we have just alluded, she was able in a short time not only to shake off her gloomy thoughts, but to inspire Maggy with a confidence and courage equal to that which animated her



own bosom. Just at that time a knock was heard at the door, and Captain Lamberton entered the apartment.

The sudden appearance of this gentleman a second time occasioned more surprise than alarm to our two females. Agnes at least, after having received the mysterious note in the manner we have stated above, inferred from the terms in which it was written that there was some reason to believe Captain Lamberton might be induced to repeat the visit he had made on the previous day, although she hardly expected that the interval between his first and second appearance would have been so short. Maggy, indeed, with some confusion, stared alternately at the captain and at her mistress, as if at a loss to know how she was to behave on the occasion. But a significant glance from the eye of Agnes seemed to convince her that their visitor was to be received with civility, and she placed a chair for him accordingly, in which he immediately became seated.

"I am at a loss," he began, addressing his discourse to Miss Russell, "after what took place between us yesterday, to know how far I am at liberty to disclose my present purpose. But when I say that purpose has for its object your own peace and security, I trust I shall be excused for again intruding into this private apartment, and that I shall be listened to with calmness, if not with eagerness and satisfaction."

"Of course," said Agnes, "if your intentions be such as you represent them to be, I am bound to listen to you with respect and attention."

"Then suffer me to say," continued Captain Lamberton, "that I have heard with no little concern of the disturbance to which you were exposed last night; and although my reception yesterday was not such as I could have desired, yet believing that you altogether mistook my motives, and feeling a deep sympathy in your present distresses, I have ventured to appear before you again to-day, to renew the offers of my friendship and assistance."

"Nothing ought to be more readily acknowledged on my part," replied Agnes, "than the mistakes and errors, if any, into which I have unwillingly fallen, and no one I trust will have cause to upbraid Agnes Russell with



ingratitude and neglect, whose conduct proceeds from honorable motives."

"Can Miss Russell doubt for a moment," asked Lamberton, "the sincerity of one, whose gallantry as a gentleman, as well as whose duty as a Christian, ought to be equally pledged for her safety and happiness?"

"What ought to be done," replied Agnes, "is unhappily not always carried into execution. The world is equally full of protestations of good, and of determinations of treachery, and such is the wickedness of mankind that the latter disposition is supposed by some greatly to preponderate."

"The world is bad enough in itself," said Captain Lamberton, "and is by no means made better on account of one portion of society attempting to degrade and vilify another. Whatever you may think of my own character, I can only say that I sincerely offer you protection against a repetition of the outrages to which you were so cruelly exposed last night."

"Then hear me, Captain Lamberton," exclaimed the agitated girl. "You see before you two lone, defenseless, and unprotected females. We have traversed land and water—we have braved the ocean and the storm—we have endured pain and sickness—we have sundered for a season the ties that bound us to our kindred and our homes—we have traveled thousands of miles, and have been willing to take up our abode among strangers, uncheered and uncoun tenanced by the kindness and tenderness of our own sex—we have done all this in the fulfillment of a pious mission, and in the discharge of a sisterly duty. But the object of our visit to this distant country has not yet been accomplished,—the greatness of our task is not yet ended. The brother whom we have sought must be found, or we must be convinced that he is not within the reach of our exertions. And now we accept of your offer of protection, and look to you for shelter and refuge. But remember, Captain Lamberton," she continued—and here she rose from her seat, fixed her earnest eyes on his, and raised her hand somewhat above the level of her head—"remember that we regard you as our protector and not as our enemy, or even our cold-hearted friend. Should you dare to place the slightest obstacle in the way of our



fulfilling the sacred purpose I have mentioned—should you attempt to frustrate our designs and to blast our hopes—should you mock at our fears and trifle with our feelings—God will raise up an avenger in our behalf, whose withering curse shall follow you to the end of your days—whose accusing wrath shall go down with you to the grave!”

The energy and warmth with which this address was delivered had an evident effect on the feelings of Captain Lamberton. He shrank from its searching earnestness with something like criminal horror, and seemed in a great degree to realize beforehand the punishment of his own meditated baseness. Some moments elapsed, after Agnes had done speaking, before he was able to collect his confused thoughts so as to frame a connected and rational answer. But he insisted again on his plighted faith, and promised to convey them on the same day to a place of greater security.

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHEN Captain Lamberton had retired, Agnes explained to Maggy her reasons for acquiescing in the proposed offers of comfort and security so plausibly held out by that gentleman.

“I have no faith in him,” she said, “but neither do I fear him. The paper conveyed to us from the adjoining apartment instructs us to be guided by him in whatever is reasonable, and surely nothing could be more reasonable than an offer to effect our deliverance from this insecure and unpleasant prison-house.”

Maggy saw no reason to dissent from her mistress in the views thus expressed, and they forthwith proceeded to prepare for their departure to more quiet and comfortable lodgings. They still indulged the fond hope of hearing shortly from Alfred Russell, and of meeting him face to face, in which event they knew they would be relieved from all their cares and all their troubles.

In the afternoon Captain Lamberton brought to the



door of the hotel an old-fashioned family vehicle, drawn by two horses, which seemed to afford very little promise of either comfort or convenience.

After Agnes and Maggy found themselves seated, the carriage drove off with as much rapidity as was consistent with the condition of the streets through which they had to pass. In a few minutes they proceeded on a course that ran parallel with the shore. Here the horses were brought up suddenly in front of a steep embankment, on the other side of which was a long, low building, apparently erected for the purposes of trade and business. Captain Lamberton now descended from the seat he had occupied as driver, and informing the two females that they had arrived at the end of their journey, handed them out of the carriage.

The first thought of Agnes, when she lighted on the ground, was that they were now much nearer the hotel, from which they had taken their departure, than Captain Lamberton would have been willing to own. But she refrained from making any observations at that time calculated to betray her suspicions or her fears. She looked quietly around her, and endeavored to put on the expressions of a calm and cheerful countenance. The spot on which they first alighted from the carriage was one of dreary vacuity, where, however, she was able to make such observations as gave her a pretty distinct idea of the objects by which she was surrounded. The bay stretched out in unmeasured distance before her, and the hoarse murmuring of its restless waves could be heard plainly beating on the shore, down to which, from the spot where she stood, there was a somewhat steep descent the whole way. Right before her was the bank we have already mentioned, still more steep and precipitous than that behind her leading down to the bay, around which winded a track or cart-way that seemed too steep and dangerous for the use of the carriage they had just left, and that led up to the back part of the building seen across the embankment. The building itself, like almost all the houses then existing in San Francisco, possessed no other features of attraction than its absurd proportions, and the grotesque order in which its several parts seemed to be fitted together.

"Our way lies up this path," said the captain, after



Agnes and her companion had descended from the carriage; and he immediately made an offer of his arm to the former, who, however, as promptly refused it, and took hold of that of her faithful friend Maggy.

"There is nothing very inviting here," said Agnes to Captain Lamberton, as they continued to wind their way round the rugged cart-way I have mentioned above; "but I suppose nothing very inviting can anywhere be expected in this growing city. Everything is new, and everything appears to be rough and unfinished."

"You are right, Miss Russell," said the captain. "There is nothing very attractive in a country so remotely situated from the civilized portions of mankind, and where all, nevertheless, are in the pursuit of that which is supposed to be the sole means of human enjoyment."

They now approached the end of the rough and circuitous path they had been treading, and as they drew nearer to the rear of the building, which was only partially seen from the spot where they had first alighted, Agnes was surprised to discover that it was protected by something like a regular fortification, thrown up at the expense of considerable labor, so as to prevent an easy irruption into the premises. The defense itself might have been intended merely as a substitute for a stone wall, or for some weaker barrier against outward aggression, which is so common in other parts of the world, but she could not but notice, however, that pains had been taken to render this protection unusually strong and durable. It seemed to contemplate security from more than ordinary violence.

The entrance into this strange citadel was secured by a gate of lofty and ponderous dimensions, which now stood directly before them. Although of very rude construction, it was evidently framed with a view to uncommon strength and security, that might well defy every attempt of outward violence which at that time could have been made by the most formidable force capable of being raised in any part of California. It appeared to be of impenetrable thickness, and was so densely studded over with flat-headed spikes that it presented to the eye the resemblance of a solid mass of iron. It was impossible for Agnes to approach this formidable entrance without feeling some apprehensions for her own safety as well as for that of her



companion. A cold shudder pervaded her bosom, which she was almost sure was experienced to a still greater degree by poor Maggy, who at every step seemed to cling more closely to her side. But as they drew nearer to the postern which admitted passengers through the massy thickness of this mighty door-way, not a word was spoken by either of the parties, not even by Captain Lamberton. He marched forward with an apparently firm but silent step, the two females following closely in his rear. And yet it may be doubted whether his own feelings were a bit more steady and composed than those of his companions. He must have felt, what the stoutest men feel, when engaged in the accomplishment of some criminal intention, and when they know that intention may be defeated by the interference of some sudden accident, or the unexpected prying of some single eye. Nor were his nerves less sensibly affected when, just before arriving at the entrance we have described, Maggy made a sudden halt, drawing her mistress forcibly back by the arm, and declaring in mournful, but plain and decided language, that it would be as much as their lives were worth to enter beyond the dark bounds of that gloomy-looking prison wall which now frowned so terribly before them.

It may easily be imagined that Agnes was almost ready to make the same declaration; but having proffered the offer of a confidence which she was unwilling to retract, and conceiving that it would be improper to abandon an experiment before she had a fair opportunity of testing its results, she made a sign to Maggy to remain silent, and whispered in her ear that they had quite as much to dread perhaps by obstinately refusing to go forward, as they would have by quietly following the movements of their leader. Captain Lamberton at that very moment seemed to be made fully sensible of the alarm which had taken possession of the minds of his hesitating followers. The consequence was that he bounded forward with hurried precipitation, inflicted a loud knock on the postern, and before our two female adventurers had time for further remark or reflection, stood at the opening of the little gateway, with Billy Braxton at his side, ready to receive them.

If Agnes and her companion were again somewhat sur-



prised at the appearance of this mysterious individual, they seemed, nevertheless, only to take the more courage from his presence. Indeed, he beckoned them to proceed, by a private signal, so contrived as to increase their own confidence in his ulterior intentions, while it entirely escaped the vigilance of Captain Lamberton. This measure at once produced the effect he seemed to desire. The two females advanced boldly toward the low gateway which now stood open for their admission, penetrated through the narrow entrance, and in a moment afterward found themselves shut in by the frowning barrier toward which they had at first approached with so much reluctance.

Not a word was exchanged by them with Billy Braxton. They were content to understand his motions, without seeking for any more definite knowledge of his plans and intentions. But their eyes were forcibly attracted toward two other individuals whom they passed as they crossed the inclosure into which they had just entered, and who seemed to be placed as sentinels to add still greater security to the rampart erected in the rear of the building toward which they were now approaching. They had but little opportunity of scrutinizing these individuals very closely, but they saw enough of them to know that they were armed, and what surprised them still more was, they discovered them to be the very same men who had so rudely, only a night or two before, invaded their private apartment from the adjoining billiard-room. There were certain marks about the countenances of these ruffians so terrifying and prominent that the impressions they left on the minds of our two females could not be easily effaced. The moment these marks were again exhibited to their senses, they had before them the lively picture of each individual actor on that shameful occasion.

In passing through the inclosure nothing else that was remarkable arrested their attention. They soon reached a flight of steps which seemed to lead directly up to an apartment of the main building. The door opening into this apartment was carefully unlocked by Captain Lamberton, and all entered it except Billy Braxton, who took a different path round the building as soon as they had reached the bottom of the stairway.



The apartment into which our adventurers were now introduced seemed to be that which might belong to a commercial warehouse, and which had been prepared with the single object of rendering it secure and substantial. The frame-work was principally composed of rough logs, which were spanned and held together by immense beams extending from one side of the building to the other. Round the room were arranged shelves, which seemed to be uncommonly strong and massy, many of them resembling the fixtures of a mill or foundry rather than the arrangements of an ordinary store-room. On these shelves were deposited a great variety of mercantile articles, such as may be daily seen in the majority of stores established in our small country towns. But in other places little kegs and boxes were stored away with a much more careful regard to their value and security. These Agnes was led to suppose might contain that golden treasure which here in California, as everywhere else, seemed to be the great object of human pursuit and acquisition.

They passed from this room into another, intended, as Captain Lamberton informed them, for their accommodation so long as they should remain under his protection. Everything in this apartment seemed to be plain, humble, and uninviting. It contained but little furniture, and that was of the meanest and most common quality. A low flock-bed in one corner of the room, a large wooden chest in another—a small looking-glass, which distorted the countenance into the most provoking frightfulness—two or three chairs and an old pine table—constituted the entire inventory of goods and chattels with which this apartment was furnished. Agnes gazed round for a moment, and then looked at Maggy, whose eyes overflowed with a flood of tears.

“It would be unreasonable for you, as yet,” said Captain Lamberton to Agnes, “to expect much refinement or luxury in a place so new as that of San Francisco. This room I had fitted up for myself, and I now cheerfully dedicate it to your own convenience. You are here at a distance from the bustle and turmoil of the business part of the city. An old woman, a native Californian, will discharge for you all the menial services which you could expect in a place like this, and I myself will call occasionally



to enliven and cheer your solitude." Before Agnes had time to reply Captain Lamberton vanished out of the door by which they had entered, and although he could not be seen by the parties he left behind, he was distinctly heard to lock the door before he descended the steps which led to their apartment.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

AFTER Captain Lamberton had retired, the first thing Agnes did was to give vent to her anguish, like Maggy, in a flood of tears. She next began to commune with her companion on the subject of their present confinement, and the remarkable change which had evidently come over Captain Lamberton as soon as he thought he had safely immured his prisoners within the walls of his own strange-looking castle.

"He has deceived us, Maggy," said she, "as I was apprehensive he would do, but I still feel as if I did not fear him. And he has his myrmidons too, who are no doubt pledged to assist him in the accomplishment of all his nefarious purposes. Did you mark the two ruffians whom we passed in the yard below, and who were the same individuals who frightened us so much by intruding on our privacy from the billiard-room? May it not be that this very Captain Lamberton, who was so ready to pledge his faith for our protection, who advised us to flee from the ruffianly violence of those cruel men, and who affected to sympathize with us so deeply in our unprotected loneliness, was himself the contriver of that disgraceful conspiracy which caused us so much annoyance at the hotel, and which has been the means of transferring us to this more alarming apartment? Oh, Maggy, this man's perfidy is indeed greater, I am afraid, than I had expected!"

"I always suspected and I always feared him," answered Maggy. "But what is to be done next? He has caught us in his trap. Who will be able to free us from so cruel a persecutor?"

"Who, indeed, will be able to do so?" exclaimed Agnes.



“And yet we must not desert our own principles, or abandon that patience which is often of more real value in times of difficulty and trial than a thousand fruitless schemes formed for the purpose of escape and deliverance. The one teaches us how to endure sorrows like men—the other is too apt to prompt us to flee from them like cowards.”

“But we will be neither men nor cowards,” said Maggy, “but will act like brave, simple-hearted, and suffering women. The patience of which you speak belongs more particularly to our sex, and for the sake of that sex you at least, I know, will not forget to cherish and exercise it.”

“Thank you, thank you, Maggy! for your own example of true heroism. And now let us rather practice our precepts than stand here complimenting each other. I am afraid we are fairly trapped, as you say; but so long as we are at liberty to think and to reason for ourselves, even if it be in a space so narrow and confined as that to which we are at present subjected (and surely this is a privilege of which no one can bereave us), we may justly boast that we have something yet for which to be thankful and for which to suffer. No power on earth can deprive us of the glorious privilege of thinking and feeling, a privilege which may be enjoyed in a prison as well as in a palace. But these are sentiments which, after all, a woman’s heart knows better how to cherish than to utter. Patience! it is the virtue of poets, of martyrs, and of females, and yet is so little known to the world that it is always the least seen when it is in the most powerful exercise. And now, Maggy, what say you to the last apparition of Billy Braxton?”

“I can say but little,” answered Maggy, “because I know but little; and yet I would a thousand times rather trust myself, methinks, to the probable interest which this man takes in our lot, however cautious he is in openly standing up for our defense, than in the hollow professions of friendship which come with such a bad grace from Captain Lamberton.”

“It is more than likely you are right,” said Agnes, “for either Braxton intends to betray us or save us, and we have many reasons to believe he favors the last design rather than the first. But, hark! some person is about entering the door, and we must be on our guard against



talking too freely, where not only our actions but our words will perhaps become the subjects of anxious watchfulness and remark."

By this time the bolt was unlocked, and a tall, uncomely female entered, who carefully closed and secured the door behind her. The two girls were somewhat startled at first at the appearance of this strange-looking woman. As she entered the room she folded her arms carelessly across her breast, and advancing about half way from the door, she took her position in the middle of the apartment, and gazed with a kind of vacant stare on the half-alarmed females who stood before her. Agnes paused for a space, expecting every moment that the silent messenger would declare the object of her visit. But not a single word came from her lips, and she stood entirely motionless, as if awed by the presence of those she had come to encounter. Her dress consisted of a dirty, coarse blouse, which descended close to her feet, and which was bound in irregular folds to her person by a belt tightly buckled round the middle of her body. Her complexion was swarthy, her hair of the Indian hue and texture, and her eyes small, gray, and unsteady. There was but little expression in her countenance, and her general appearance indicated that tame and passive fatuity which is peculiar to all old persons of weak and impoverished intellects.

After a pause of some moments, finding that the woman was not likely to come to any speech of her own, Agnes addressed her as follows:

"Who are you, my good woman? and what is it that you have come to seek in this apartment?"

"Live with Captain Lamberton," she replied. "Don't know much Inglis. Come to do what you tell me."

"Oh, then," said Agnes, "you are the person he has appointed to wait on us in this gloomy place. But we do not need your services at present. We would rather be left alone for awhile."

The woman now advanced nearer to the spot where Agnes was standing, and either not comprehending what had been told her, or determined to have her own way in making herself useful even when she knew her services were not required, she very innocently handed each of the girls a chair, and motioned them both to be seated. The



performance of this task seemed to afford her great pleasure, and Agnes guessing that it would be a real gratification to the woman to become engaged in the discharge of some little service for them, handed her an empty pitcher which stood on the table, and told her to go and bring that full of water. The poor woman started on her errand with a smiling countenance, and was observed to take the same precaution again in securing the door which led out of the apartment. When she was supposed to be out of hearing, Agnes observed to Maggy,—

“That woman would seem to be an idiot, or very little better, and yet it may be doubted whether Captain Lamberton would have committed our persons to the custody of so simple a creature unless she possessed some qualities which he thought would answer the purposes he has in view. She certainly knows how to unlock and lock the bolts of a door, and to take care of the key afterward. But we shall, doubtless, know more about her in the course of time.”

The old woman returned to the apartment again as soon as these words had been uttered, and having deposited the pitcher of water on the table, and being assured a second time by Agnes that they stood in no further need of her services, she retired in seeming good humor, and left the two girls to indulge in their own thoughts, and struggle with their own sorrows. Here we will leave them too, held under duress by Captain Lamberton, while we proceed to depict the events of another part of our story.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

THE atmosphere was hot, dry, and cloudless, and the ground was cracked and parched from one of those long-continued droughts which are common to the regions of California. It was the hour of noon, and not a bird or an insect was heard to disturb the solemn stillness which everywhere reigned around. No kind breeze wafted its refreshing coolness over the landscape, and no murmuring stream sent its liquid melody from the pebbly bottom over which it passed. From the sand and the rocks the heat was reflected in steamy currents which seemed to be as palpable to the eye as to the touch. The trees were motionless—the hills were voiceless—and the arid waste, as far as the sight could stretch, appeared to repose in beds of hot and feverish stupor. From the mountain ravines alone trickled down, here and there, a narrow, almost a capillary flow of water, with a sound as noiseless as the undisturbed stillness of the atmosphere itself. At the bottom of one of these ravines, on a solitary spot in the midst of the Moke-lumne mines, a workman lay stretched on his back, discouraged, exhausted, and desponding. But still he applied his feeble strength to the exercise of the instrument by which he hoped to extract the precious ore from the earth, and to enrich himself with the spoils that once presented themselves in such brilliancy and with such certainty to his imagination. Alas! his long-continued efforts seemed to be only in vain! And now his strength was about to fail him entirely—his hopes gave way to the bitterest anguish, and dropping his exhausted arm at his side, he lay for a moment sad and motionless. Then rising to his feet, and hurling the instrument he had been so faithfully but so fruitlessly using from him, he disturbed the monotonous stillness by pronouncing audibly to himself the following mournful soliloquy:

“I will not, I cannot, endure this fruitless search any longer! God knows, I have worked hard for the last two



weeks. I have lived like a hermit—I have toiled like a slave—and what has been the reward of my privations and labor? Have I realized the golden dreams I have followed so eagerly—so foolishly? Has wealth flowed into my pockets, as I was told it would, only for the trouble of going for it, and lifting it from the ground? Where now is the fulfillment of those visionary promises published in newspapers, advertised in the open streets, proclaimed at the quiet fireside and in the busy hotel, exultingly dwelt on in public and in private, and shouted in the ears of credulous expectants even in the church and the Sunday-school? Alas! the airy castles have vanished into nothing! The fairy structure which seemed so bright and beautiful has sunk again into earth. The golden promises which all seemed to proclaim, and none to doubt, are proved to be false and deceitful—and here, on this hard rock, in this barren sand, as everywhere else, God has written in a language that is eternal and ineffaceable that man must ‘earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.’ Fool that I was to suppose that wealth could be honestly acquired in any other way!

“And why could I not be contented in the humble and happy abode where God had so graciously cast my lot? I must needs forsake my father’s house—despise the respectable calling in which I had been born and educated—and seek for more showy and fashionable employment in the great world. What have I gained by the exchange? Am I more honored, more caressed, or more happy? Have I succeeded in making myself more useful, or have I become more healthy or more wise? Let this toil-worn frame—these soiled and tattered garments—this cheerless solitude—yonder tents erected for temporary shelter—yonder companions, as desperate and unhappy as myself, speak and testify. No! no! I have madly thrown away the blessings I once enjoyed, and betrayed the trust which was committed to me by an earthly as well as a heavenly parent!”

The poor young man who uttered this melancholy language threw himself on the ground, buried his face in his hands, and seemed to be lost in the dread extremity of grief and despondency.

Reader, are you disposed to regard the above picture as



a creation got up for the sole purpose of adorning the tale we have been rehearsing? If so, depend on it you are about to fall into a most culpable error. The scene we have attempted to draw has, in a thousand instances, had its counterpart in real life, only with a coloring more truly mournful, more tenderly vivid, and more highly affecting. Ours is a picture where still lingers, if not in the foreground, yet at no great distance from the main figure, the form of Hope, inviting and beckoning the disconsolate mourner to her cheering embraces. But how many scenes have occurred in real life where there has been no light, no hope, nothing but the somber hues of a dark, dismal, and fatal despair? The poor, agonized mourner, shut out from the world—remote from human aid and human sympathy—friendless and powerless—with no eye but that of Heaven to pity, and no arm but that of Heaven to save—sinks forsaken on the cold lap of earth, and can only look for consolation to the bosom of his father and his God.

The young man, whose feelings and language we attempted to describe above, had not remained long in the position in which we left him before he was accosted by a person who appeared to be still younger than himself.

"I say, my good friend!" exclaimed the youth, who emerged from behind the point of a rock in front of which our mourner was sitting, "have you struck the last blow for gold and independence? Why are you squatting so disconsolate on the ground, as if the gulches of our Eldorado here were no better than our own granite hills at home? Cheer up, man? What has come over you?"

"No luck! no luck, young master!" answered his companion, rising from the ground, and putting on an air of greater cheerfulness than really belonged to him. "I feel as if I had been in search of the philosopher's stone, and only deserved to be laughed at for my pains."

"Yes; I understand you," replied the other. "About to abandon the placers of California for a life of more ease and respectability. Well, I am sure that I cannot blame you, as I am sometimes strongly tempted to pursue the same course myself. But I have a mother, as you know, and that consideration urges me to toil on almost against hope."



"For your mother's sake, then," replied his companion, "let me believe that you may yet be successful. As to myself, I have both father and mother, each of them, I am happy to say, as kind and affectionate as your own earthly parent. But I am afraid I made but a poor return for their warm and anxious love. They wished to see me happy, and pointed out the way in which I believe it would have been easy for me to become so. My own headstrong pride, however, was too blind to receive instruction. I thought I was wiser than they; and forsaking their counsel, and the promise of certain prosperity, for the privilege of seeking my fortune in the world, I have arrived thus early at the end of my hopes, and feel very much at present as if I were providentially brought to see in clear light the true character of my own folly and ingratitude."

"All for the best!" exclaimed the more youthful adventurer; "no doubt designed in the end to make you a very good boy. But do you know that before I left San Francisco I received a commission from Captain Lamberton to watch you closely, and report to him from time to time the nature and direction of your movements. What a fool I was! I had almost said what a traitor I was to the feelings of brotherhood and humanity! But then a moment's reflection made me see my fault and despise myself. And when your friend Braxton gave me hints of that man's villainy, my conduct became still more odious and despicable in my own eyes. Oh, my friend! forgive me, for in accepting the hateful trust committed to me, I was certainly unconscious, as at first impressed, of the meanness of my behavior toward you."

"But how," answered the other, "did you discharge yourself of the task you had undertaken to perform? How did you get rid of engagements into which you had solemnly entered, and for which I suppose you were to be liberally paid?"

"Oh, I tore myself from them at once," cried the indignant youth. "I informed Captain Lamberton by the first opportunity that I believed he had deceived me, and that we might consider ourselves mutually absolved from all obligations to each other."

It is unnecessary that we should remind our readers



that the two individuals between whom this dialogue was carried on were our familiar acquaintances, Percy Courtland and Molton Fairview. But at this point of their communication with each other they were interrupted by a third individual, who, gliding forward from some hidden recess in the mountain-passes before them, placed himself directly in front of our two adventurers, and commenced speaking to them in the following language :

“Glorious success! I do assure you, gents—no less than fifty dollars’ worth of the real stuff in less than three hours. Why, I do vow and declare that this is the finest country in the world. I came here penniless; and they told me if I would make a living I must work the very shirt off my back,—they told me, the unmannerly knaves, that I must even work on Sundays and holidays, or I would starve. But I didn’t believe them, and I took it all coolly to myself. On Sundays I rested like a good Christian, and sometimes employed myself in reading the Bible. On the Fourth of July, and such like days, I went in for the honor of my country, and in this way, you see, I made out reverently to observe every necessary law, both human and divine. Why, sirs, I have grown rich by it. Don’t you believe me? Do you say you must have the evidence of it in specie,—that you must not only hear me speak of it, but that you must handle it and weigh it with your own fingers? Do you cry, ‘down with the dust!’ like a man who is never satisfied till he has his hand in his neighbor’s pocket? Then here it is,—as genuine as if it had been bought for a price, and labeled at the mint.”

So saying, this eccentric individual exhibited the result of his morning’s operations by pouring into a handkerchief, spread on the ground, a considerable quantity of the precious metal which all were so eagerly in search of, but which was acquired with such unequal success. Having made this tempting display of his wealth to his companions, he proceeded to say that he had not been at the pains of collecting it for nothing.

“How is that?” answered Percy. “As you are an old bachelor, Darsie, and have no persons to provide for but yourself, one would suppose that your good luck could



hardly be made use of for bringing about a corresponding good anywhere else, unless you saw fit to use it for the mere purpose of producing something like good living."

"Precisely so," replied Darsie Hopkins. "You have just been as lucky in hitting the nail on the head as I have been in gathering these shining particles of gold. And now, my boys, let me tell you that I fixed on this very day to furnish a repast for our palates that would do honor to the table of a prince. I love you both, and knew that I would meet you here, where we might feast together, without grudge or hinderance, under the great canopy of the skies, and amid the shining veins of gold which no doubt circulate freely in all directions around us, if we only possessed the happy faculty of finding out precisely where they are."

Then unlocking a very capacious valise, which he always carried with him as the depository of all the earthly property he owned in the world, he proceeded with his cheerful exordium as follows :

"Here, you see, are sandwiches and sardines. By-the-way, we must not forget to drink a bumper to the Earl of Sandwich ; for he it was who was the first inventor and proprietor of this capital luxury. I got them a few days ago, when in San Francisco, at about a dollar apiece,—cheap enough, when you consider they are of Chinese procurement. And here is ham, and tongue, and lobster-sauce, all furnished from the same great house, at prices equally reasonable. Why, sirs, we shall feast like Roman emperors, on dishes which, if not gems themselves, at least cost as much as it would take to buy a brace of jewels for the birth-night dress of the daughter of a New York millionaire. And this bottle of champagne, so bright, so sparkling, so volatile, and so cheap, too ! Only ten dollars, with a little instrument to boot to draw out the cork. I would have bought another bottle had I known that my luck would have been in the ascendant this morning. But I remember the prudent lessons taught to me in my youth—that my expenses ought never to exceed my income. So I was even content with this one bottle, and sacrificed desire to economy."

Poor Darsie Hopkins rattled away at this rate for half an hour, and had much more to say of the same kind. He



was one of those careless adventurers, found in the gold diggings of California, who had received a tolerable education, and was of a respectable family. But parental neglect, the prospect of inheriting a competent fortune, and, what is a necessary consequence of a condition so little to be envied, indolence, rendered him impotent in regard to a useful and active course of life, and at the age of twenty-three or twenty-four he found himself little better than a mere blank in society. And yet Darsie Hopkins possessed some most excellent qualities, which, under a wiser and less sluggish discipline, might have advanced him to a post of high honor and respectability among his fellow-men. As it was, when his increasing years made him better acquainted with the world, and he was roused by his own discernment to a sense of the tame and spiritless life he had been leading, he felt truly ashamed of his own weakness and insignificancy. But what was to be done? He had wasted the most important years of his youth in idleness, and without a profession or calling, and with habits little calculated to repair the loss he had sustained by this early neglect, like thousands of others whose lives have run to waste in a similar manner, he was willing to seize hold of the first employment that in any way promised to fill up the dreary void existing in his unfurnished and discontented mind. The consequence was that he fell in with the great current that set so strongly toward the gold regions of California, and with no definite object in view, thoughtless, improvident, and unguarded, he became engaged in digging from the earth what it would have been better for him to have gained by a more easy and genteel occupation of his head and his hands in some other and higher sphere of usefulness.

The hospitality of Darsie Hopkins, so liberally tendered to his companions, was as freely accepted by them as it was offered. They sat down to a costly and luxurious if not a plentiful feast. In the flow of youthful hilarity, with no restraint but such as was dictated by their own innate sense of propriety, with no interference of fashionable rule or formality, young, ardent, and elastic in their hopes and feelings, they forgot their past sorrows and discouragements in the fruition of present enjoyment. Percy Courtland derived new hope from the open, honest sincerity of



his two companions, and from the ardor with which their own hearts seemed to be inspired.

But before they had completed their generous repast Darsie Hopkins communicated to him a piece of news which made a direct appeal to his better feelings and expectations.

"It is strange," said Darsie, talking to his friend Percy, "that all the luck is on my side. But now that I think of it, perhaps I have not so much to boast of after all. Do you know, Percy, that the alcalde, or committee, or whatever may be the name of that honorable association which regulates the golden issues of this great country, have appointed you the special messenger to take charge of the next deposit that is to be conveyed to the fortified vaults of our commercial metropolis? Now you see that is an appointment to a post of honor, and one that not only trumpets forth the sterling value of your integrity, but puts money into your purse besides. What a fool I was not to have thought about this sooner."

"If what you say be true," answered Percy, "I might well be content, and proud too, to exchange the barren prospects of an unlucky miner in this neighborhood for an engagement like that of which you speak, of so much more profit and importance. But how may I become assured that your announcement is really true?"

"How!" exclaimed Darsie. "Can you for a moment doubt my word and honor, my good fellow? Why, sir, I was actually commissioned yesterday to bid you repair, with all possible dispatch, to Sacramento City; and this good news, you may depend on it, I would have imparted to you sooner, only that I was afraid you would have left us in the midst of our feast, and that the loss of your company would have been to us the loss of a day's happiness, which I thought we had just as good a right to secure to ourselves as you had to enjoy your new honors and emoluments."

Percy was so well acquainted with his companion's peculiar feelings and disposition that, although he was tempted to smile at this simple avowal of his attachment to his pleasures, yet he was well convinced that he might place the utmost confidence in the truth of his statements. Acting in conformity with this conviction, it was not long



before he withdrew to the tent at a distance, which he and Molton Fairview had occupied together for some days past, and having collected his little effects into his carpet-bag, and taken leave of his comrades, he proceeded at once to Sacramento City.

Before attempting to narrate the events which befell him there, and the adventures which, as a consequence, followed afterward, it is proper that we should turn our attention for a short time to what was going on at Courtland Hall.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

“WELL, Harry!” exclaimed Virginia Truehope, on one of those beautiful days in the spring that had succeeded the departure of Agnes Russell on her mission to California, “I think I am fully entitled to the palm which your father says ought always to be awarded to merit whenever it can be ascertained that one person excels another, in consequence of bestowing on a particular subject superior industry, attention, and perseverance. My class at the agricultural rooms has shown a proficiency and aptitude for learning which I think you will agree has left yours very far in the background.”

“Tut! tut! my dear coz,” answered Harry, “you are certainly arrogating to yourself too much. Now let me hear what your class has been learning during the past winter.”

“Why, just this much, Master Harry,” rejoined his companion: “every member of it has been taught how to make pickles, jellies, and conserves—how to arrange and manage a dairy—how to excel in the art of cookery—how to lay a table either for the family when alone, or for company—how to give proper attention to a wardrobe—and how to become interesting and pleasing in dress, in manners, and even in conversation. Now, all this, you know, belongs to a well-bred lady, and especially to a lady who expects to have the management of a family in the country.”



"Yes !" said Harry ; "there are two rules, so far as regards domestic economy, which all ladies ought to observe, within the one or the other of which I believe is comprised their whole duty. The first is to learn how to make or manufacture an article that is wanted, and the second is to learn how to use it after it has been thus manufactured. This last rule is really the most important of the two, since it can be of no moment at all to be furnished with the most plentiful and abundant means, means which may even prove inconvenient and burdensome, if we are ignorant of the uses to which they are to be applied."

"Well ?" replied Virginia.

"Well ?" rejoined Harry ; "have your pupils then learned how to make an article, and how to use it properly afterward ?"

"Why," said Virginia, "I must confess that this last consideration did not strike me as so very important. But I remember now that your mother, who always took great delight in assisting me, never failed to give it the weight which I suppose it deserves."

"Exactly so," observed Harry. "And you would now take credit to yourself not for what your own wit was able to discover and contrive, but for what was so kindly pointed out to you by my mother. Now in truth and in fact, Miss Virginia, I am a little doubtful whether this is altogether fair."

"Pooh, Harry !" exclaimed Virginia, "you are really critical, nay, I had almost said cynical. But let me hear, my kind and gentle instructor, how you have succeeded with *your* pupils. What have you been able to teach *them* ?"

"I am afraid, indeed," said Harry, "that I have not been able to teach them much, at least that my efforts have not prevailed agreeably to my own wishes. But I have attempted to instruct them *how* to do a thing, and for *what purpose* to do it. I have endeavored to convince them of the great importance of method, of forethought, and of resolution to overcome opposing difficulties. I have reasoned to them from my own experience, and taught them that if it is not always in our power to command success, we should at least try to deserve it."

"Just like you, Harry," rejoined his companion ; "plain,



straightforward, and practical, but withal a little too philosophical. Well, well, perhaps we poor girls have more conceit than philosophy, and so you see there are faults on both sides. And having come to this conclusion, let us be at quits with each other. I will agree to call you a good boy, provided you are willing to return me the same compliment, or that you will say at least I have done very well for a young lady."

Before Harry had time to reply to this pacific overture, Henry Courtland, followed by his neighbor, Mr. Russell, and attended by Mrs. Truehope, entered the small library room to which we have already had occasion to refer, and where Harry and Virginia were assembled on the occasion in question.

"This everlasting silence," said Mr. Russell to his friend, "is agonizing to one whose fond hope is eagerly striving after something in the distance which is either too far away to be scrutinized, or which has disappeared and perished entirely. It is now more than eight months since my daughter sailed from the City of New York, and no intelligence has yet been received either from herself, or from those who might know something about her."

"And yet your child may be as safe and as comfortable too," answered Mr. Courtland, "as we are within the room of this little library. You do yourself great injustice, Mr. Russell, in taking so seriously to heart the silence of your daughter. You are really beginning to look ill, and, unless you learn how to exercise a more cheerful trust in the Divine Providence, the consequences may be fatal to your own peace and happiness."

"Alas! my friend," rejoined the disconsolate father, "I am afraid that even you are unable to sympathize with the feelings of a saddened and almost broken heart. When our own bosoms are not weighed down by the sorrows and misfortunes of life, we scarcely believe that sorrows and misfortunes have an existence anywhere else. Who but the sufferer himself can tell what it is to have one earthly prop after another knocked from under him, until the last hold appears to be sinking, and the only remaining consolation is about to be swept away forever? Will not the heart then feel its own bitterness? Will it not shrink from the infliction of a sorrow so oft repeated—



from the spectral form of grief even when it is not real—from the hand that chastises even when it is that of a father? And who has had greater cause for these nervous fears and anxieties than myself? It was not a single blast, or a single bolt, that left its scathing marks on my defenseless head as it passed over me in fearful alarm and terror—it was not a sudden stroke, a stroke that laid me on the earth, and then suffered me to rise again in the full enjoyment of renovated strength and vigor—but the storm howled and howled in successive shocks of never-ending terror. The long reverberation struck my startled soul with a sense of danger that is still haunting me. And now I cannot but feel concerned for my poor, banished daughter. Was she not the only treasure that was still left me—a treasure which, if lost, can never be replaced by any adequate substitute that this world has to bestow? Was she not kind, affectionate, humble, and obedient? Was not her life entwined with my own—her young, noble, and generous nature pledged for my support and consolation under the infirmities of age, and in the hour of sickness and death? And now where is she? Oh, Agnes! oh, my child! my child!”

We may imagine that Henry Courtland was seriously alarmed for the peace and happiness of his friend. Such intense, deep-seated, and overwhelming sorrow! Such a formidable approach to utter hopelessness and despair! How was he to overcome it? What could be said to rouse him from the terrible desperation into which he seemed about to fall? Mr. Courtland could only say to him, “You must be calm, my friend! It is wrong—it is decidedly sinful—for you to imagine, that you, above all men, have been afflicted by the chastising rod which everywhere falls in mercy on the children of men. Let me exhort you to become more manly, or, what is still better, to become more humble, submissive, and patient. If you cannot become cheerful, you ought to resolve at least not to submit to despair.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Mr. Russell, “you tell me not to grieve, and I feel how much my condition would be benefited—how decidedly I would become a wiser and a better man—if I could but follow your advice. But my weakness—my sinfulness, if you please—still leads me to be-



lieve that my own misfortunes have been meted out with an unsparing hand, and that my own heart is burdened with a weight that has fallen on me alone."

During the brief period that was consumed by the speakers in uttering the language we have narrated above, Mrs. Truehope, who at first had retired to a corner of the little room in which this dialogue took place, gradually emerged from her hiding-place, until she stood directly in front of her old friend Thomas Russell. That gentleman, as if sensible of her scheme to attract his attention, raised his eyes from the floor, and fixing them fully on the person who stood before him, seemed prepared to listen to any words that might flow from her lips. In a moment afterward she addressed him as follows:

"We have long known each other, Mr. Russell, and I trust not without having contributed somewhat to each other's happiness. Perhaps each of us knows the other better than we know ourselves. For my own part, I am but a weak woman, and yet I feel as if I had a message to deliver even to you, which may not be without its effect on your heart and understanding. You speak as if you lived alone in this dark world of sorrow, and as if its storms and tempests beat only on your own exposed and devoted head. Even at the very moment when one stood here at your side as afflicted and sorrowful as yourself, you were ready to regard your individual sufferings as transcending the measure of all other sufferings, and as identified exclusively with your own person and your own destiny. But in this permit me to say you labor under a most delusive error. Am I not here to tell you so, and to convince you of the truth of what I assert? How is it possible, I say, that your own sufferings should be exclusive and peculiar, when in this very room, and at this very time, you behold before you a person with whom you have been long acquainted, and whose trials in life have so remarkably resembled your own? Have I not, like you, suffered the loss of property, the loss of him who was my best earthly friend and protector, the loss of my dear children, the loss of my best hopes and consolations? And am I not a woman, a weak and suffering woman, destitute, or supposed to be destitute, of those sterner feelings of courage, fortitude, and endurance which are imagined to



belong almost exclusively to the other sex? And yet here I am, standing unsubdued even in the midst of my weakness—struggling forward in the midst of my sorrows—bearing up against the weight that is seeking to overwhelm and crush me. And all this suffering you permitted to pass before you without having the least desire, or the least ability, to take from your own sorrows the smallest feeling of sympathy and bestow it on those of your friend! Did I not say you were selfish? and did I not say that I would convince you of it? God forbid that I should indulge too freely in proclaiming my own afflictions! But it is for your sake, Thomas Russell—it is because I wish to see you triumph over a sorrow and selfishness that does not become you as a man and a Christian, that I have thus dared to appeal to the sadness of my own experience.”

Mr. Russell was deeply affected by this pathetic address made to him by his friend. He cared little for the opinions or the applause of the world, yet he was not deficient in that almost universal feeling which teaches us to pride ourselves on the dignity of our manhood, and which raises our concern and indignation whenever that is assailed. It was this feeling, enlightened we have no doubt by a sense of resignation and duty which he had so dearly learned in the hard school of adversity, that led him to respond in the following terms:

“Yes, I am, as you say, a selfish man, but I trust I am not blindly perverse and obstinate. It is very certain that all grief is selfish, and it is not wonderful therefore that I should forget the afflictions of others in contemplating those which annoy and distress my own heart. But I hope to be able to profit by the lesson which you have so kindly attempted to teach me. And oh, may we both learn how to meet, even with gratitude and cheerfulness, the sorrows of a world which you rightly intimate are purposely designed to fit us for the joys of another and a better world hereafter, and may we believe at the same time that these sorrows will always be proportioned to our strength to bear them!”

At the very moment Mr. Russell had commenced making this penitential declaration, and had so justly and beautifully referred afterward to an humble trust in the Divine Providence, Rowland was standing at the door with



a letter in his hand, which he now delivered to Mr. Russell, saying that he had a few minutes before got it out of the post-office.

The old gentleman received it from Rowland with a trembling look, examined the post-mark, and was much agitated when he found it was a letter from California. While engaged in its perusal, it was evident, from his countenance, that he was affected with both joy and disappointment. But he soon folded the letter up, and then remarked, with much calmness and self-possession, "It is a letter from Alfred. My son is still living, but he says nothing about his sister. It bears date at Sacramento City, and at a time when it might be supposed that Agnes and he would have met in some part of California. He mentions that he had been sick, which prevented him from writing, but that he was again doing well."

"Even thus," observed Mr. Courtland, "are your own words verified at the very instant they are uttered. Is there not here a remarkable instance of a kind Providence adjusting the circumstances of your life to the strength and ability with which you are able to bear them? He never suffers the human heart to become entirely desolate and forsaken. When He withdraws one blessing He invariably bestows another. While He has for a little season, and no doubt for a wise purpose, deprived you of your daughter, He has at the same time, and in an unaccountable manner, restored to you your son."

"I would be humble and grateful," answered Mr. Russell, meekly.

"And so would I," added Mrs. Truehope, "and yet it would now seem to be my turn to lament. For while you are thus confessedly favored by a kind and good Providence—thus enabled to bear your sorrows with resignation and composure—from whence may I look for consolation to my own troubled heart? The ties of affection which were sundered many, many years ago, still remain broken as when that heart was left in its first desolation. My children and kindred have long since been taken from me—the stately tree has been despoiled of its branches—one, two, and three—and not a single germ has taken their place in the parent stock. And I am a woman. But I will not complain. I will not belie the strength which a



moment ago I was disposed to call my own, and which I sought to array against your more fretful but more determined heroism."

The language and behavior of Mrs. Truehope on the present occasion, although not in direct contradiction with each other, gave unmistakable evidence of the weakness of the human heart. So long as she considered Thomas Russell to be as miserable as herself—so long as she believed that adversity held equal and divided empire in their two bosoms—she seemed to be able to bear her misfortunes with the utmost calmness and equanimity, and upbraided him with his own weakness. But the moment she imagined her own sorrows to be greatest—the moment she fancied that he was in reality more kindly favored by Heaven than she was herself—she experienced that anguish of soul which appeared to delight in its own misery and desolation. It is strange indeed that we should take pleasure in knowing that others are as unhappy as ourselves. May God deliver us from a feeling so selfish and so cruel!

"I am no great admirer," said Henry Courtland, after these gloomy clouds had passed away, "of the tender complaints and lamentations of melancholy. I would rather see a clear sky and an unruffled atmosphere. Let us walk out in the open air. This glorious day has a magic and a charm about it which I think may well put to flight a whole host of the numerous ills which flesh is heir to. The majestic sun shining so brightly in the heavens—the green foliage which so densely shades the hills and forests—the beautiful birds singing in the branches of the trees—the humming insects—the pure flowing water—the cool fountain and the healthy breeze—next to an humble trust in the care of Omnipotence—are the very best preventives, if not the most certain cure, for that gloom and melancholy about which we have heard so much to-day. Let us go out, and leave our cares and troubles behind us!"

The whole company now burst forth from the small apartment in which they had lingered so long. It was the month of June, that gorgeous season of the year when Nature is dressed in her most splendid livery. The fields were studded over with green corn—the wheat and the



rye had just shot up to a height which the rural connoisseur loves to admire—the landscape was rich with a verdure as deep and as bright as the emerald hues that first enlivened the garden of Paradise—the grass in the meadows was standing in rank luxuriance, as if anxiously waiting for the mower's scythe to reduce it to neatness and moderation—the very air breathed an odor which to a poetical imagination associated the charms of Elysium to those of our own sinful earth. So animated and cheerful was every object by which the sight was arrested that the heart swelled and glowed with a pleasure that was full and overflowing. Harry attempted to stifle Virginia with roses. Virginia in her turn filled Harry's hat with clover-heads, and compelled him to carry them home for the purpose of feeding her rabbits. Rowland climbed a tree fifty feet high after a squirrel, and Mr. Courtland himself was fain to show his youthful agility by leaping over a ditch at its widest part, where, on ordinary occasions, he never failed to make use of a foot-bridge. Even Mrs. Truehope and Mr. Russell seemed at last to catch the pleasing contagion, and to forget their griefs in the joyousness and animation of summer.

"I remember," said the former, "when this beautiful country was the admiration and delight of my poor Clara. She was then at home—fearless of to-morrow—proud in her opening womanhood—unconcerned about the past, and ardent in the anticipation of the future. She lived much amid the enjoyments of an ideal world, and yet she never forgot the plain, simple, every-day duties, which she owed to her friends and companions. She knew how to admire the liquid light that illumines the brow of yonder hill—to soar with the lark far beyond the limits of those visible objects—to lose herself in spheres of brightness that were dazzling and beautiful. But like the same bird that wings its flight upward toward heaven, she would return again to earth, and on some lowly bush or humble tree pour forth the joys that filled her pure and innocent heart. And then while she rejoiced in the feelings of her own happiness, she delighted in nothing so much as to make others happy like herself. My poor, dear Clara! Life, perhaps, has since been only bitter to both of us, and yet on such a day as this, I am almost able to renew the freshness of early



enjoyment, which I once fondly thought would last forever."

"Well, mother!" cried Virginia, after the former had closed her tender rhapsody, "I think, instead of falling into the sear and yellow leaf, you are really going back to the days of youthful fancy and extravagance. Why, truly, what you just now uttered is the very romance of melancholy. I did not suppose that, in your old days, you were capable of so much feeling and imagination."

"I cannot exactly say how it may be with others," answered her mother, "but I should be sorry to think that I possess less feeling now than I did twenty years ago. Age may indeed impair the powers of the intellect, but when the troubles of the heart have long been felt, its quickness of perception will not unfrequently triumph over the dullness of the understanding."

"And yet our great object should be," said Mr. Courtland, "to keep the mind and the heart well balanced. We should take care neither to indulge in too much feeling nor too much thought. They mutually influence each other; and when one is suffered to become disordered, it follows, of course, that the other must become disordered likewise."

"We should undoubtedly aim," answered Mr. Russell, "to establish such a balance in regard to all the pursuits and employments of life. This, perhaps, is the secret of success in every prosperous undertaking."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Courtland, who now saw another opportunity of indulging his remarks on the subject of his favorite hobby. "Here is my farm, which I am far from believing is one of the worst in the world. I think I may certainly say that I have kept it pretty well balanced. It is composed of aggregate proportions of upland and meadow—of orchard, corn-ground, and wheat-land. Each part is treated according to the most approved methods of cultivation, and in reference to its relation and utility to the whole. Indeed, these separate portions of land are as necessary to each other as the members of the human body, and taken altogether they constitute one complete, productive, and undivided farm. But if I should undertake to pay more attention to one part of it than another, this admirable symmetry and equilibrium would soon be destroyed, just like it would be if more attention were paid to certain organs and faculties than to others in the human body."



“Blow me!” cried Rowland, who seemed to have caught his master’s enthusiasm, “if it is not a glorious farm, and here we are at the very spot to prove it!”

They had now arrived at a high eminence, situated at nearly the center of Mr. Courtland’s possessions, and which commanded a distinct view of separate portions of his admirable domain in all directions. The prospect from this eminence was one of exceeding great interest and beauty. We are accustomed to admire magnificent buildings erected by architectural skill. We are equally pleased with the ingenious arrangement of extensive factories, the neat and imposing combinations of vast ranges of machinery, and the wonderful art displayed in preparing a mighty ship for the ocean. But there is a thousand times more beauty, more variety, and more magnificence in the orderly disposition and arrangement of a first-rate farm. Nothing in itself can be more truly neat and attractive, more perfect, or better calculated to create wonder and admiration in the mind of the beholder. So thought the company who were that day called to witness the remarkable neatness and finish of Henry Courtland’s farm; and they returned to the house fully satisfied that he was almost excusable for being vain of his treasure.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN Percy Courtland arrived at Sacramento City he was intrusted by the agent of the Committee of Reform and Superintendence, who were about to assemble at that place, with the personal charge of transmitting to San Francisco a considerable amount of the precious metal, which they had bought from the miners in the neighborhood, and which was now to be transferred to their establishment in this latter city, under the control and safe-keeping of Captain Lamberton. “We have assigned this task to you,” they said, “because we believe you to be honest and trustworthy, and we shall expect you to guard the treasure committed to you with the utmost care, and to defend it, if necessary, at the risk of your life. Should you prove faith-



ful and triumphant in the discharge of your duty you will receive a reward in proportion to your fidelity and merits—but should you prove recreant or dishonest to the trust confided in you, you may rest assured that the consequences will fall, with no circumstances of mitigation, on your own head.”

The treasure was contained in a large leathern pouch or bag, strongly secured under lock and key, and carried in a box on an ordinary two-wheeled carriage or sulky. Percy was armed at the expense of the Committee, and started off in high spirits, complimenting himself with the hope that he might now reasonably expect to realize a considerable sum of money by the undertaking, which would make up for the ill success that hitherto had attended him in his mining operations. Nothing of consequence befell him that day on the road. At night he arrived at a ranche, about half the distance between Sacramento and San Francisco, at which he found two individuals already assembled who seemed to be traveling like himself, and whose appearance he regarded with but little grace or favor. These men he would willingly have avoided had it been in his power; but, as there was no other convenient stopping-place that could give him shelter for the night, and as both himself and his horse stood in great need of refreshment, he was compelled to alight, without attempting to proceed any farther, and to place himself and his treasure under the protection of the host or landlord. The treasure was carried into the house, and the landlord agreed to be responsible for its safety.

The rude hostelry at which our adventurer sought for refreshment and accommodation that night was on a par with similar houses of entertainment established for public convenience in all parts of California. It was possessed of but very scanty means of comfort, and although it offered no kind of refreshment whatever without exacting an exorbitant price for the amount of entertainment furnished, it was nevertheless rather regarded by the person at the head of it as an establishment intended for private comfort, where hospitality was dispensed as a favor, than as a means of accommodation got up for money. Little attention was paid to the wants or necessities of travelers. Every guest was expected to take care of himself—to



pasture his own horse, to attend to his own baggage, and sometimes even to provide his own bed. Percy Courtland thought it a little remarkable, therefore, that the landlord, on the present occasion, should have so willingly taken charge of the treasure committed to his custody.

It was not without some concern and hesitation that Percy suffered the box which contained it to pass out of his own hands. But he resolved to see to its safety by a vigilant oversight. For this purpose he took his position in a corner of the cabin where the box was directly under the cognizance of his own eyes, and where he kept it in view even while partaking of the coarse provisions that were served up for his evening's repast. The two travelers who were present on his first arrival had not escaped his attention. He watched their movements with some degree of suspicion, if not of alarm, and his apprehensions became not the less fearful when, just before they left the apartment, he overheard the following conversation between them :

"The grand committee," said the older to the younger-looking traveler, "is about to assemble at Sacramento City, and I suppose they have bought up all the yellow stuff that has been collected the last two months in the neighborhood. This is hardly fair, as you may well know, Martin Blakely, seeing they buy it at a discount of no less than twenty-five per cent. And our worthy employer, Captain Lamberton, is a full sharer in this impudent speculation, and we are here to do his dirty work, without being rewarded with an extra ounce of the glittering metal for our pains. I think, Martin, this is not exactly democratic—it is not according to the true spirit of Californian liberty."

"Hush, Reuben Maxwell!" exclaimed his companion, "you are enough to alarm the whole neighborhood by your prating. Haven't we got the golden mountain under lock and key at San Francisco, and haven't we got it in our power just to dictate such terms as we please? Let Captain Lamberton, or any of the honorable gentlemen composing this famous committee, attempt to bar us of our rights, and I for one go in for the plunder of the public treasury. They know better than to cross our path, for, although they have undertaken to regulate the country, yet I tell you, Reuben, it won't stay regulated. But I find I am prating like yourself, and who knows but the



fellow who was here a few minutes ago may be listening with an ear-trumpet. We must be wary, comrade, and show that we know how to do our business like men who have learned it thoroughly."

"And therefore let us retire for awhile," said the elder guest, "in order that we may be certainly out of harm's way."

It was evident to the mind of Percy Courtland that the two travelers had been slightly drinking, so as to give a loose exercise to their tongues, notwithstanding they still retained a sufficient share of sobriety to put them on their guard against a reckless and indiscreet exposure. It was owing, perhaps, to this cause too that they entirely overlooked the presence of Percy, who, although he had purposely ensconced himself in one corner of the apartment so as to attract as little attention as possible, would have been probably detected by eyes that were not dimmed by the fumes arising from their previous libations to Bacchus.

After the two men had withdrawn from the apartment, Percy was naturally led to consider the purport of the conversation in which they had indulged. But of this he could form no certain or reasonable conjecture. How much, if any of it, related to himself it was utterly out of his power to determine. That these men were the agents and emissaries of Captain Lamberton, for some purpose or other, he could not for a moment doubt. That they were not entirely satisfied with his conduct toward them, and that they believed they had it in their power to right themselves against any wrong he might see proper to inflict, was equally certain. But beyond this he was unable to comprehend their meaning. All that he could determine in his own mind was, that he ought to be on his guard.

The caution he had been taught by the two men who had talked with so much freedom, but with so much mystery to each other, he was determined at once to observe. Calling on his landlord, therefore, for the box containing the treasure he was transporting, and which he believed he had not lost sight of for a single moment during the whole evening, he placed it under his arm, and expressed a wish to retire to bed. The landlord conducted him to a garret or loft above



the main building, which, owing to the heat of the weather, received the cool air from an opening at each end of the same, and which enabled our adventurer to extend his observations to a considerable distance over the level country. The moon was shining in silver brightness, and not a cloud intervened to throw a shadow over surrounding objects. Percy stood at one of the openings we have mentioned, and gazing across the white light that so beautifully reposed on the face of the landscape before him, he caught sight of a small carriage or barouche encamped near the edge of a wood not far off, a horse feeding at its side, and the owner apparently slumbering in the interior of the vehicle. He was somewhat surprised at first that he had not observed this sight before, but recollecting the little opportunity he had previously enjoyed of exploring the premises, and the necessary restraint he had laid on himself during the early part of the evening, he was at no loss to account for the manner in which it had escaped his notice. Nor was there anything remarkable in the sight itself. It was a common thing for travelers to carry with them their own supplies of food both for horse and man, to encamp out in the woods at night, and to depart the next morning with no indebtedness to mortal for aid or comfort except what was derived from their own resources. After enjoying the beauties of the moonlight scenery a little longer, Percy placed the box he had brought with him at the head of the homely bed or pallet on which he was about to cast his person, and, committing himself to the care of Omnipotence, slept soundly until the next morning.

When he awoke it was broad daylight, and the first thing he noticed on approaching the opening or window at which he had been standing the previous night was, that the traveler who had encamped at the edge of the distant wood had already taken his departure. He was able to discern, from marks on the ground left behind by the horse and carriage, that the person who accompanied it was traveling in an opposite direction from that which he himself had been pursuing. Feeling no particular interest, however, in what he regarded as but an every-day occurrence, and placing his box, which continued to rest safely on his bed, again under his arm, he descended to



the lower apartment of the building. On inquiry he found the two travelers, who had attracted so much of his attention the previous evening, had likewise made their exit.

Percy repaired to the spot where he had secured his horse the night before, still careful to retain about his person the box which had now become to him an object of so much solicitude—and depositing this with great care in the place assigned for it under the seat he occupied while driving, he harnessed the horse to the sulky with his own hands, and immediately departed on his journey without waiting for breakfast.

Nothing of moment happened to disturb his quiet previous to his reaching San Francisco. He entered the city with the pleasing consciousness of having performed his duty well, and with a thankful heart for the peace and security with which he had been suffered to complete his journey. But he was not unmindful of the relation in which he stood toward Captain Lamberton. He remembered his conversation with Billy Braxton on this subject, and was reminded of the hints that individual had thrown out of the captain's determination, if possible, to injure him. And yet he had no clear insight into the cause of this man's hostility against him. He was well aware that the captain had treated him unkindly, if not maliciously, in the City of New York, by endeavoring to impair his credit with a class of men among whom he was seeking for employment; but he had never been able to define the reason of this sort of treatment, and was disposed to believe that it proceeded more from some private grudge he had conceived against him than from any selfish scheme of settled hatred or animosity. "At all events," he said to himself, "it is out of his power to operate to my disadvantage in relation to the business which has now brought me to this city. I come as the agent—as the ambassador, I may say, of highly respectable men with whom he is himself connected—of men whom he will not dare to thwart, because his interests are intimately identified with their own. I come, moreover, as the accredited prosecutor of a successful mission, which is not only to procure me a generous reward, but which is to raise my character and standing in society. What, then, have I to fear from Cap-



tain Lamberton? When he understands the exact nature of my intentions and business—the true extent of the honor that has been done me—may I not rather hope to win his esteem and applause, and find him desirous of seeking my own favor and friendship?”

Occupied with such reflections as these, Percy Courtland stood at the massy gate of that fortified defense which frowned in the rear of the mercantile establishment of Captain Lamberton, and which we have already attempted to describe in another part of our story. He knocked for admittance, and in a few moments he was suffered to enter. The ponderous gate again moved on its hinges, and he found himself shut up within the narrow limits of that ominous inclosure.

One of the first things that arrested Percy's attention, after he was admitted to the inside of this gloomy-looking prison-yard, was, that he stood in the presence of those very two men whom he had seen at the ranche the evening before, and whose conversation he found it so difficult to understand. Of their identity he entertained no doubt whatever. Nor did this second meeting tend to give him a more favorable opinion of their real character and disposition. They were now sober, and were less loquacious than they had been the night before. But they exhibited the same sinister expression of countenance, the same recklessness of feeling, the same unequivocal marks of baseness and treachery. Percy gazed at them in silence for a moment, as if unwilling to hold communion with beings so singularly repulsive and suspicious. At last he asked, in an almost faltering voice, for Captain Lamberton.

“He will be here in a moment,” said one of them. “He has gone in search of the scales which is to ascertain the amount of the precious stuff brought by you, and now to be placed on deposit.”

Percy alighted from the vehicle which he had driven into the inclosure, and again instinctively caught the box, containing the rich burden he had been transporting, in his arms. He then pulled out of his pocket an inventory or schedule of its contents, which he held in his hand, ready to deliver to Captain Lamberton.

The captain soon made his appearance, and approached



Percy with an affectation of cordial greeting, and with a countenance different from what he had worn a few days before when they first encountered each other in the same city.

"You are welcome, my young friend," he said, "to the mercantile house of Lamberton & Co. I can hardly suppose that you are aware of the exertions I have made to place you in the way of your present appointment; but men who are truly kind and benevolent are not apt to boast of the favors they bestow on others. Let me see your credentials, and the amount of the metallic currency you have brought to the bank."

Percy handed him the paper he had a few moments before taken from his pocket. Lamberton glanced his eye at it carelessly, and then remarked, as if in a tone of pleasing exultation, "Ay! ay! we have reason to be satisfied. The investment is growing better on our hands, and each of the shareholders will, after awhile, receive a handsome dividend. But come, Mr. Courtland, follow me! We will adjust this matter in the room above."

So saying, the captain led the way by a path which terminated at a common foot-ladder, reaching up to the same building which was partly occupied by Agnes and her companion, but to a different door from the one they had entered. The door opened into a narrow passage or gallery, which was dark and gloomy, and led directly to a similar door at the other end of it. When they arrived at this entrance the captain knocked slightly with his hand, accompanying this movement with a low expiration or whistle, which was immediately responded to by some person within, who appeared to make the same kind of noise, and who proceeded to unbar the door for their admission. The door swung toward the inside of the apartment, and the person who opened it seemed intentionally to screen himself from observation by falling behind it, and then gliding hastily into the narrow entry, Captain Lamberton himself as hastily shutting the door on him as he retired. These movements were executed with so much rapidity, and were so little anticipated by Percy, that he had but small opportunity of seeing the figure that had so suddenly vanished from the apartment. But he did catch a glimpse of his person; and, from the view which



fell so indistinctly on his eyesight, he was forcibly impressed with the belief that the fleeting apparition in reality constituted the substantial form and features of that mysterious personage, Billy Braxton.

The first act of Captain Lamberton, after he and his companion became fairly inclosed together in the apartment from which the other person had just made his escape, was to lock the door, and put the key in his pocket. This movement was not regarded by Percy as indicating anything very remarkable, after he had an opportunity, for a few minutes, of gazing round the room into which he had just been ushered, and contemplating the objects which crowded its interior. The room itself seemed to run parallel with the narrow gallery outside, and was in length much greater than in breadth. Its floor was constructed of massy plank, with a central post or column extending through the ceiling above, and apparently resting on the solid ground below at the foundation of the building. Like the room into which Agnes and her attendant had been first introduced, it was evident it had been constructed with a principal view to its strength and durability, although it possessed other peculiarities equally adapted to the purposes for which it was erected. At each side of it, and at equal distances from each other, shallow indentations or recesses had been left in the solid timber, and these were filled up either with ponderous iron safes, such as are common now in all the mercantile houses of our large cities, or with thickly-studded leather trunks or boxes, which might have been of almost equal strength and weight with the safes themselves. There was but one window in the apartment, and that looked out on naked space at a very elevated distance from the ground, and was so obscured and confined that the light streamed through it but in faint and somber patches.

Captain Lamberton drew nearer to this light when he again undertook to scrutinize the paper on which were inscribed the weight and quality of the precious metal that had been committed to the care of Percy Courtland. "I see," he at length exclaimed, "you have brought twelve hundred ounces, which I will now proceed to weigh with these scales." So saying, he requested Percy to unlock the box which inclosed the leathern case or pouch con-



taining this costly treasure, and as soon as he received it into his hands he remarked, "It seems light—much too light. I am afraid there is some mistake here."

Percy made no other reply than merely to say, "We shall know more about that after it is weighed."

The contents were accordingly arranged in separate parcels, and it was soon found that the whole together exceeded little more than half the reported amount.

"Young man," exclaimed Lamberton, "you are ruined! I am sorry that I recommended you to the Committee; but it is thus that our best actions are sometimes rewarded."

Percy was struck to the heart by a feeling of fear, anxiety, and shame, which for a moment rendered him entirely speechless. At last he cried out, "I hope you do not accuse me of having done anything wrong, Captain Lamberton?"

"I accuse no man," answered the captain. "It is your own conscience that must accuse you—it is the evidence of this deficient weight—the test of these just and equal balances—that must accuse you."

"But I am not guilty," answered Percy, with warmth. "I have been wronged somewhere, and in some manner, but I cannot tell where or how. I must go back, and, in the best way I can, endeavor to ferret out this mystery."

"You cannot do that without first obtaining my permission," answered Lamberton, "and that permission I am bound to withhold until I shall have an opportunity of consulting with the Committee who confided to you a task of so much value and importance. I hope you may be innocent, young man," he continued to say, "but you ought to have learned before this time that in California a breach of trust is equal to an open and unqualified felony."

"I have committed no breach of trust, and no felony!" answered Percy, with indignation. "Let me return, that I may at least make an effort to vindicate my conduct from these reproaches."

"Yes!" said Captain Lamberton, "and involve others, perhaps, in the effect of your own rascality. No! no! Percy Courtland, that will never do! You are my prisoner by virtue of the open exhibition you have here made



of want of faithfulness in the discharge of a simple duty, and according to the conventional usages which govern this good territory of California."

"Sir!" exclaimed Percy, bursting with choler, "you are the betrayer—you are the person seeking to violate the faith and honor you pretend to value so highly! When I entered on these premises, and placed myself under this roof, I considered that your word and honor were pledged for my protection. But you are now about to abuse the confidence I reposed in you, and not only to infringe the laws of justice, but to impugn the sacred principles of hospitality. Sir! let me escape from this prison! let me seek the protection of society beyond these gloomy walls! I will go with you anywhere—I will answer to any charge you may bring against me—only let me stand before an impartial tribunal, and not be incarcerated in this solitary dungeon without hearing and without trial."

"That language would be very imposing to a man unacquainted with the world, Master Courtland," said Lambertton, "but I must confess that I am bound to look for some better security of your person than the mere vapor-ing contained in the magnificent rhetoric you are pleased to make use of on the present occasion."

"The language I have made use of, Captain Lambertton," answered Percy, "I know to be the language of soberness and good sense. You, sir, have seen proper, on the contrary, to indulge in reflections as false and scurrilous as I believe to be the state of your own corrupt and dishonest heart. I am well aware that this is not your first attempt to injure me, nor would I be doing more than simple justice to myself were I to use the power I possess (showing a pistol which was concealed in his bosom), as a means to free me from the effects of your baseness and treachery. But to fight my way from the duress under which you hold me might not only be attended with injury to yourself, but would in all probability involve me in further difficulties. For your sake, therefore, as well as my own, I submit for the present to the circumstances which have put me in your power. One thing I feel assured of, and that is, that sooner or later you will be brought to condign punishment for an act which is as cowardly as it is unwarrantable and illegal."



The word cowardly was pronounced by Percy with an emphasis that was intended to render it fully significant to the ears of the person to whom it was addressed. But that gentleman, although he colored slightly, and gave some evidence of his sense of the indignity with which he had been assailed, contrived to suppress the emotion he felt, and replied with apparent coolness, "Then, Mr. Courtland, suffer me to introduce you into another apartment, which you will find better adapted to the circumstances under which you are unfortunately placed at present."

So saying, he opened a door opposite the one at which they had entered, made signs for Percy to follow him, and having secured his prisoner in this manner, without further ceremony or conversation he locked him in, and withdrew from the apartment.

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### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE room in which Percy now found himself was low, dark, and narrow, with a bunk or couch to sleep on in one corner of it and a chair and small table in another, but without any other signs of comfort or convenience. There was one peculiarity about it, however, that attracted Percy's attention. In the corner, just above the couch or bed on which it was intended the prisoner should repose, there was an opening or trap-door that he conjectured communicated with a loft in the upper story of the building, and which he supposed might have at one time been used as an additional sleeping apartment. But the exact nature or design of this communication he had no ready means of ascertaining.

Percy now sat down on the only chair with which his gloomy apartment was furnished, and began to indulge in such reflection as the strange events that had just befallen him seemed naturally to inspire.

"How dark and mysterious," he said to himself, "are the changes of fortune to which we are continually exposed in our progress through life! At least my own ad-



ventures have thus far been as strange and unaccountable as they have been painful and embarrassing. But all this has happened to me since I undertook to improve my condition in the world, and to shape my own destiny. A few months ago I was happy—happy in the enjoyment of domestic love, peace, and prosperity—happy in the sunshine of parental affection—in the reciprocal warmth of fraternal esteem and regard—in the sacred observance of filial duty. My occupations were such as to exercise and invigorate the body, as well as to afford pleasure and improvement to the mind. But I was willing to exchange the caresses of parental love—the holy tranquillity of domestic peace and quiet—the calm pleasures and pursuits of a useful employment—for the checkered and conflicting dreams of worldly gain and worldly ambition. And now, where am I? How have I realized the golden expectations which I suffered so foolishly to dazzle and bewilder my imagination? The world to me has been cruel and unjust. I asked for bread, and, in its hardness and insensibility, it gave me a stone. I asked to become enlisted in the turmoil and bustle of business, and I was rejected as one who was alien to the claims and sympathy of society. I at last found my way to this land of hope and speculation, and all my labors ended but in sorrow and disappointment. And now, when I thought I had rendered myself useful in the discharge of an important trust committed to me, I find myself suddenly apprehended as a felon, and my person confined to the gloomy cell of a private prison. Such is the return which the world has made to one who supposed he would be happy abroad only because he was dissatisfied at home. But I will not murmur. It is a lesson, indeed, that has been dearly learned, but which may teach me a thousand things to make the world worth living for after all. Nay, it is a lesson which will teach me the secrets of my own heart—my want of judgment—my pride—my self-will—my little ability, without other assistance, to govern and direct myself. Having learned all this, it will only be necessary that I should begin a new life, in order that I may experience a better fortune, and arrive at a new and permanent degree of happiness. If I have not voluntarily humbled myself, I have at least been humbled by circumstances; and who will say that even this humility may



not lead to that exaltation which is promised to the meek and lowly?"

In indulging such reflections as these, Percy's bosom gradually assumed the warmth which it borrowed from the fervor of his faith and the strength of his imagination. His heart was filled with new hope and new resolution. Visions, bright and beautiful,—expectations that hung on the future with joy and gladness,—carried him forward to a period of his existence when he should be emancipated from his present disgraceful confinement, and his good thoughts and good intentions should again assert their claims to regard amid the recognitions and acknowledgments of his fellow-men. "Yes!" he exclaimed aloud, "there is a bright side to this changing world still, and all that is required to enjoy it is a courageous and cheerful heart!"

"Do you say so, my dear Percy?" exclaimed a voice, which surprised, if it did not terrify our lonely prisoner. "Do you say so?" it continued. "Then lend me a helping hand, and happily we may be led to form some schemes which will enable us to enjoy it together."

Percy gazed round the apartment with fearful anxiety. Nothing, however, was visible but the same somber gloom that enveloped it at his first entrance. But his ear was attracted to the trap-door which opened, as we have already mentioned, above the bunk in the corner where was situated his lowly bed. Gradually the door was lifted up, and a human form immediately afterward suspended itself from the opening. Percy now became fully sensible that his assistance was necessary in order to introduce this form into the apartment below. He accordingly tendered the help that had in the first instance been requested, and in a moment afterward Billy Braxton and Percy Courtland stood side by side in the narrow apartment which the latter regarded as his prison.

"And so, Percy!" exclaimed the former, "you have been soliloquizing and philosophizing, like a man whose nose has been ground by the sharp asperities of the world, but who still stands confident and erect, without having sustained any other injury than a spoiled face. Well, you have been fortunate in escaping with the distortion of one member only, although, by a striking coincidence, that is



the one which marks your boldness in scenting your way in society. But a man who has a prominent nose will always be aiming at a prominent station, and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that that member should be occasionally jostled from its equipoise. Better that than the whole body to be shaken to pieces like a scarecrow in a thunder-storm."

Percy was highly amused, and was somewhat astonished at the cool, collected humor of his companion. It was with a spice of the same humor, therefore, that he answered,—

"I am at a loss to understand you. You have not only dropped upon me like a ghost, but you have undertaken to speak to me like an oracle. While I am simply seeking to know where you came from, you see proper to hold forth in a strain of metaphor which almost makes me believe that you are a genuine specter. I am half tempted to exclaim with the mad prince, 'Angels and ministers of grace, defend us.'"

"And although," said Braxton, "I will not say that I am doomed to fast in fire, yet I might, with great truth, allege that I could a tale unfold which, if not quite so horrible, would at least be almost as marvelous as the ghost's. But a truce to this nonsense. Let it suffice you for the present to know that I am acquainted with all the secret hiding-places and labyrinthine windings of this modern fortress or castle, from the straight upright shaft which you passed in the other apartment, to the little trap-door in yonder corner, through which I descended in order to get into this."

"But why," asked Percy, "visit me thus by stealth and in secret? I believe you passed me from the adjoining apartment, as I entered, and infer from that circumstance that you are still in the confidence and employment of Captain Lamberton. Why, therefore, is it not in your power to visit this part of his premises at any time you may desire, without secrecy and without concealment?"

"For the simple reason," replied Braxton, "that the captain himself prefers managing his prisoners, whenever he has any, in his own way, and at the cost of his own personal oversight and labor. He is not willing that I



should hold the slightest intercourse with them on any occasion. Whether this proceeds from a want of confidence in me, or an overweening reliance on his own skill and management, can make no difference, since in either case I am forbidden to speak to them, or even to see them, if that can be avoided. This will account for the signal that passed between us, and the manner in which I retired from the apartment, at the time he and you were making your entrance in company."

"But why, then," answered Percy, "have you ventured to visit me on the present occasion? Surely you must run some risk in an attempt like this to oppose the wishes and designs of such a man as Captain Lamberton."

"By my faith, Percy, you are right!" exclaimed Braxton, "and if this were the only risk I had to run since my connection with that base individual, the evil would not be so great after all. But listen, Master Courtland, to a confession which I now make as freely to you as I hope it will soon place us both on a footing of greater ease and safety than we enjoy at present. You knew me years ago, at a time when my constitutional sluggishness and indifference had overpowered my better faculties, and had induced me to simulate a character which not only rendered me insignificant, and turned me from the nobler pursuits of men, but really made me mean and contemptible in my own eyes. From that state of inglorious ease and inaction I suddenly roused myself by entering into the service of Captain Lamberton. I was able to change my manners, my habits, and, in many important respects, my whole character. And yet I was not so entirely changed but that I still retained my former ability of assuming an outward deportment which was greatly at variance with the true state of my feelings and disposition. I soon discovered that Captain Lamberton entertained a selfish purpose of entering into a tender and near relationship with Miss Russell, which he and I were equally aware would meet with her decided disapprobation. But, under the circumstances, I still found it necessary to dissemble—not, indeed, with any design on my part of making myself an accomplice in carrying out the schemes he had in view, but with the object of retaining my position in his esteem



and favor for awhile, until I should finally be able more completely to baffle him in his projects, and defeat a scheme which might prove so injurious to the young lady. It was utterly impossible that I should abandon his service without destroying my own prospect of rising again in the world, and restoring myself to that station of respectability to which I thought myself justly entitled. I, therefore, suffered myself to become his confidant, listened to his designs of mischief, and sometimes even seemed to lend my assistance to their more perfect accomplishment. But God knows with what determined reservations I acceded to his wishes. If, in doing this, I really violated any principle of truth or justice I trust to be forgiven. All that I can say is that my ultimate intentions were good—good toward Miss Russell, good toward the world, and good even toward Captain Lamberton himself. And now the time seems to be approaching when these intentions may be fulfilled. The schemes against Miss Russell have nearly ripened to maturity, and either she must be caught in the snare that has been laid for her, or efforts must be made at once for her deliverance.”

Percy listened with intense interest to the language uttered by Braxton, and when he had concluded exclaimed,—

“This recital is strange indeed. And yet it may be true—it must be true. But how is Captain Lamberton able to injure Miss Russell here? She is far away in the State of New York, and he is at the present moment an inhabitant of this very city, and thousands of miles from her.”

“In that,” said Braxton, “suffer me to say that you are mistaken. Miss Russell is not far from this place. She is in California, and is an inhabitant of the same city with Captain Lamberton.”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Percy, “you do not mean to say that Agnes Russell has really arrived in California—that she is now near us, and dwelling in this very city?”

“Be calm and listen,” said Braxton. “In a few moments you will be acquainted with her whole story.” He then proceeded to recount to Percy the principal incidents in relation to that young lady’s visit to California



with which the reader has already become acquainted, the part which he himself had acted in relation to this matter, and the motives which influenced his conduct. When he had done, Percy again, with much eagerness and anxiety, repeated the question,—

“But where is she? May I not have an opportunity of seeing and conversing with her? Does she not stand in need of a friend—of a protector—and ought I not to render her that assistance which, perhaps, she can expect to receive from no one else?”

“Hush!” cried Braxton. “You forget that you are helpless and a prisoner, and that you yourself stand in need of that very assistance which you believe it in your power to extend to others. The great object of my visit to you at this time is, to convince you that it will be your interest, and the interest of Miss Russell too, to remain calm and quiet, until circumstances shall so far develop themselves as to demand your personal interference for her rescue as well as your own. In the mean time resolve to be guided by my instructions. I have prepared you for the issue, and whatever may happen, be on your guard to act under every emergency with boldness, but always with judgment and prudence. Suffer me now to retire. It is impossible I should remain here longer without danger.” So saying, Braxton, aided by Percy, made his escape through the same opening by which he had entered, and left his friend to his own troubled thoughts and reflections.

Percy rose from his seat, and paced the narrow apartment in which he was confined with hurried steps. Braxton, as the reader has perceived, was studious in concealing from him the fact of Miss Russell being held in duress by Captain Lamberton, under the same roof, believing he had good reasons for keeping the knowledge of that fact from his friend. He very well knew that if Percy should become acquainted with a circumstance of so much importance, he would in all probability grow impatient and restless, and would jeopard the interests of all parties by trying to effect an interview with Agnes before the time for doing so had arrived.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

DAYS and weeks passed away, and Percy and Agnes still continued to be held under that kind of restraint which amounted to virtual imprisonment. Braxton made out to communicate occasionally with both the parties, and whenever he had opportunity he enjoined on them the exercise of a little more patience, told them that the hour of deliverance would most certainly come, and encouraged them with the hope of brighter days and of better prospects. The old woman who waited on Agnes and her companion, more perhaps from a feeling of her own self-importance than from any real sympathy for the sufferings of persons whose sorrows she was unable to understand, paid so much attention to their outward wants as to save them from any positive or peculiar privation. Captain Lamberton himself was by no means remiss in his attentions to Agnes. But these attentions were more like the inquisitorial visits of a government officer to a state prisoner than like the tender assiduities of a friend, intent on healing the sorrows of a lacerated and wounded heart. He often came to her room with forced smiles and affected solicitations for her welfare, but never without pressing a suit which she repulsed and disdained, and which always left her more miserable than she had been before.

On one of these occasions he had been unusually warm and ardent in his addresses. Maggy had been permitted to retire for a brief interval with the old woman, their attendant, and this gave him an opportunity of making his appeals with more warmth and earnestness. Finding that his attempts at blandishment and flattery were of little avail, he at last began to utter threats of vengeance.

"Do you know, Miss Russell," he said, "that I have it in my power to affect your peace and happiness in a most tender point? Do you know that that brother whom you profess to love so dearly, and for whose sake you say you



have encountered so much and suffered so much, is liable to be persecuted at my instance for a gross violation of the laws by which the people of this territory have agreed to be governed? Do you know that I am able to bring him to punishment, to disgrace, to imprisonment—nay, that I may even expose him to risk of perishing miserably on the gallows like a murderer or a felon? Do you know this, proud girl, and will you still continue in your perverseness and obstinacy to deny my suit, and to insult my feelings?”

Agnes Russell was not proud, but she possessed that exquisite sense of high and honorable feeling which made her shrink as it were from the least touch of contamination. Nor was this quick sensibility alive alone to the preservation and purity of her own character. She disliked to think that those who stood in near relationship toward her were the subjects of less purity and loftiness than herself. No wonder therefore that she should be roused by the aspersions so coarsely and wantonly uttered in her presence by Captain Lamberton—aspersions indeed not vented against herself, but what to her was equally provoking, against a brother whom she loved as she loved her own life—against him for whom she had risked and suffered so much, and whose honor and integrity were entwined with the warmest pulsations of her heart. Her color rose, and her blood coursed more quickly through her veins, as she exclaimed,—

“Captain Lamberton, I defy you—I throw back on your own base character the false imputations you knowingly attempt to bring against a man whose name you are unworthy to take on your libelous and polluted lips. I recall the memory of my brother’s virtues—I recall the recollection of your own vices—I appeal to your former baseness and your present turpitude—to witness that you are a vile slanderer—a false accuser! Think not to terrify me into submission by acts so unprincipled and so villainous as these. You may threaten, but I scorn your threats and I defy your malice. You may defame, but the breath of scandal proceeding from your unhallowed mouth only carries with it the true qualities of your disordered mind. Would that he were here whose reputation your lying lips have so wantonly sought to sully and vilify! He would



scourge the false spirit out of you, and compel your cowardly soul to ask pardon for the injury you have done him."

The feelings under which Agnes labored may be judged of from the language she uttered with so much passion. Nor did her heart obtain relief in the expression even of such high-wrought grief and indignation. She experienced all the emotions of a strong nervous excitement, and only became calm after her agitated bosom had found vent in a flood of tears.

As to Captain Lamberton, he retreated from the interview which he held with this simple but heroic girl like a man who felt humbled under a sense of his own guilt and unworthiness, but whose desperate resolutions impelled him forward to the commission of still greater iniquity. His first object was to see Braxton, whom he contrived to meet in the same secret and gloomy apartment adjoining his counting-room which we have already attempted to describe, and which the reader will now perceive was under the same roof, and within the same walls, that confined the person of Agnes Russell and her two companions in captivity.

"The miserable affair with this foolish girl," he observed, "has arrived at a crisis at last which requires at our hands the most prompt and energetic action. My prisoner is incorrigible, and with a desperate confidence in her own strength and resources holds me at defiance. It is unnecessary that I should give vent to my own feelings on an occasion so galling as this. All that I wish to say is, that she must be subdued—that if she will not listen to my entreaties she must be brought to feel my revenge."

"And pray, sir, how may this be effected?" asked Braxton, with much apparent coolness and unconcern.

"She must be released from her place of confinement this very night," answered Lamberton, "and be taken to the old mission of Dolores, where I have made arrangements for her reception, and for the treatment she is to receive in future."

"But what of her companion?" said Braxton.

"Let her be taken back to the hotel," replied Lamberton, "the landlord of which has my instructions to



ship her to New York by the first opportunity. And as to Courtland, he must remain for the present in my custody, as a hostage for the more gentle behavior of her with whom he is no doubt a particular favorite. The Committee is about to assemble at Sacramento, whither it is necessary that we should all now repair, and I have given the necessary orders that this young man be cared for during our absence. You yourself must see to the removal of the girls. This you may easily do with the assistance of Blakely and Maxwell. I will meet you at Dolores, and there is reason for my setting out at once without a moment's delay."

Having given these sudden and hasty orders, which his confidence in Braxton assured him would be as promptly obeyed, the captain withdrew without further remark or observation, leaving his agent to attend to the necessary preparations for accomplishing his wishes at his leisure. Braxton had no difficulty in regard to the course he was to pursue. If Lamberton had been busy in perfecting his schemes in one quarter, he had been no less diligent in carrying on his own measures in another.

As soon as night arrived, Braxton was ready with a conveyance to receive the two females, and remove them to the places designated by Captain Lamberton. Before visiting their apartment, however, he had an interview with Percy Courtland.

"The hour has arrived," said he, "and you must now leave your place of confinement with as little noise and as much secrecy as possible. The two men whose duty it has been to stand guard in the fortified inclosure below, are appointed to accompany me, and to take charge of Agnes and her companion, in the carriage. Other persons have no doubt been selected to supply their places as substitutes, but what arrangements have been made for this purpose I do not precisely understand, nor do I suppose it to be a matter to us of any consequence. All that it is necessary for you to do is, to find your way out of this gloomy apartment by the secret passages with which I have made you acquainted. This may require a little care, but will not be attended with much danger. After you shall have escaped to the open country there will be greater reason to apprehend a surprise. You must there-



fore use the utmost caution in traveling, and endeavor to reach the neighborhood of Sacramento City in safety."

Having conferred in this manner with Percy, Braxton now prepared to discharge the duty assigned him in regard to the two females. He had previously acquainted them with his intentions, and now led them from the apartment they occupied to the carriage which waited at the gate of the inclosure. Here they met the two men who were to accompany them as an escort in the same vehicle. The appearance of these ruffians would have given them great alarm had they not been prepared by Braxton for the encounter. Agnes and her companion therefore quietly seated themselves in the carriage, and the two men followed their example. When all was ready, Braxton drove off toward the hotel where he was to leave Maggy, but not without feeling some little surprise on account of the perfect silence observed by both the females from the time he waited on them in their own apartment until they became seated in the carriage.

When he reached the hotel, Maggy was politely handed out of the carriage by the landlord, who, having received his instructions from Captain Lamberton, conducted her to an apartment that was already provided for her. Agnes was left behind in the carriage, guarded like a criminal who was about to be transported for some terrible offense.

Little was said by the two men during the progress of their journey. Once or twice, however, they seemed to express themselves in terms of indignation against Captain Lamberton, but owing to the rattling of the vehicle and the low and almost inaudible manner in which they spoke together, nothing definite could be learned from their conversation. Early in the morning they reached the mission of Dolores, and Agnes, according to a previous arrangement concerted by Captain Lamberton, was handed over to an old padre, who still kept possession of the ruins of an establishment which it was evident had once been in a much more flourishing and prosperous condition.

Braxton had received orders from Captain Lamberton to wait at Dolores until he himself should arrive, which gave the former an opportunity of observing the place more narrowly than he had ever done before, although he



had more than once visited the same neighborhood, and even lodged at the same mission. It presented to his eyes the utter decline and fall of a religious establishment, which now in its ruins seemed more particularly to resemble the coarseness and austerity of its once earnest and perhaps sincere devotees. Indeed, there was little left about the whole domain save perishing and mutilated vestiges of what it once had been. No chapel—no turret or spire—not even a crucifix—indicated the purposes of its original consecration. It presented the sad spectacle of the evanescent nature of our dearest projects, liable to be overturned by the slow waste of time, even when they have escaped the more rapid workings of our own folly.

“It is even thus,” said Braxton to himself, “that the vast arena of life is everywhere covered with pictures that have a resemblance in our own bosoms. In the spring we look around us with delight, and behold shadowed forth on the face of nature the aspirations and feelings of our youth, panting for the free air of heaven, budding forth into a glorious sunshine, and reaching forward toward the more perfect and more settled fullness of future existence. Each successive season stamps the colors of our thoughts on the page which it unfolds for our perusal. Each object that attracts our eyesight teems with lessons of instruction that may be read to advantage. The great map of nature is but a correspondence of the map of our minds, having its light and shadows flung over a surface of ever-changing variety. Every outward object seems to be subject to the same revolutions—to the same accidents—to the same decay and languor—that attends our inward experience. Once, we may imagine, there rose on this very spot a structure that was grand, attractive, and imposing—a building that seemed to defy the ravages and the changes of time. It was an oasis in the wilderness, a fountain in the desert from which flowed living waters. But not only must that stately structure be leveled with the dust, but the great object for which it was erected must cease likewise. The worship and the temple—the altar and the priest—must perish together—and one but proclaims the certain destiny of the other. Well may it indeed be said in plain prose, and without the least respect for poetical imagery, that there is nothing true but heaven.”



There was a small garden attached to this missionary station, into which Braxton, as he had nothing else to do, was now induced to enter. He was soon convinced, however, that even this spot possessed but few objects that were really inviting. Its walks had evidently been neglected. The few remains of shrubbery, that here and there grew in stunted and irregular patches, were knotted into inextricable disorder, and the scanty harvest of vegetables that seemed to be dying out for want of culture, gave strong evidence that it was almost entirely abandoned by its keeper. Just as Braxton was about to turn his eyes from beholding a sight which gave him more pain than pleasure, the padre appeared at a low door which opened from the back part of the decayed building, and entered the inclosure.

"You are looking into my garden," said the old man, as he tottered forward to the spot from which Braxton was just about turning away. "It is like myself—frail, perishing, and mortal. It is dying out, like the receding spirit that flits from my own life."

"I was just thinking so," answered Braxton; "and yet in one particular the parallel will by no means hold good. The products of this garden—its flowers and its fruits—may be irrecoverably lost,—all may finally perish for want of care and attention. But that, father, cannot be the case with your own immortal spirit. The Keeper of that divine spark is always present to give it light and heat; and even should it be doomed to languish for a season, we know that it will again be kindled into a holier and brighter flame."

"Thank you!" said the old man. "The language you have just uttered embodies a sentiment to which my ears have been unaccustomed for a long time. Even my own soul has been overpowered by the darkness of this world, for want of that encouraging sympathy which religion itself requires in order that it may be sustained and perfected. My friend, I again thank you for the cheering words that have fallen from your lips."

"But surely," replied Braxton, "you must sometimes meet with men who entertain serious thoughts—men who share the common wants and feelings of humanity. Religion itself is but a principle of our nature—an affection



that is intimately connected with our wills and understandings. Wherever there are men there must be religion."

"Yes," rejoined the old man, "just as wherever there is motion there is life. And yet the mystery of life is hard, very hard, to be understood. It all flows, indeed, from the same source, but much of it lies so deeply concealed that we do not see it at all. Like as the weeds choke the tender plants that are seeking for opportunity to grow in this garden, so, unless we are on our guard, the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world, as we have been graciously taught, choke the good seed that is sown in our hearts."

"Do you live here alone?" asked Braxton.

"There is none to share my humble lot but myself," answered the poor anchorite. "And yet," he continued, "I am not without company. I am frequently honored with the visits of strangers and travelers, as I am at this moment favored with your own presence."

"And with the presence of another," said Braxton, "in whom you ought to feel a much greater interest."

"There is, indeed, another lodged under my humble roof at present; but in regard to whom I as yet know but little—perhaps it ought to be my desire to know less."

"And yet it is but natural that we should seek to make ourselves acquainted with those who are about us," said Braxton—"with those especially over whom we may have been appointed to exercise some prominent influence and oversight."

The old man colored slightly, and looked at Braxton with a countenance that betrayed some concern and uneasiness. Then stooping down, as if to adjust the oblique growth of a plant, but perhaps with the more direct object to hide his own confusion, he calmly replied,—

"She is, like the rest of us, a child of adversity, and I suppose has been long familiar with sorrow."

"Why do you think so?" asked Braxton. "Has she made you acquainted with any circumstances to justify such a supposition? Has she placed you in the way of your old vocation and made you her confessor?"

"Alas!" said the old man, "I seek not for the exercise of such an office now. I suffer the wounded spirit to con-



fess to Him alone who can fully understand and relieve the human heart. But it is not necessary that sorrow should always make a confession in order to be discovered. There are a thousand signs of grief which, like the varying tints that color the countenance, give unmistakable evidence of the state of health within. A single glance of the eye may sometimes unfold a tale of woe with as much clearness as if it was written with elegance and minuteness in a book."

"And these signs you have read and understood in the person and countenance of your guest there?" observed Braxton. "I could hardly suppose you would have discovered so much."

"I have discovered nothing from her person," said his companion, "little from her conversation, and still less from her countenance. She seems seldom disposed to talk, and keeps her face veiled so closely that not much can be gleaned from that quarter. And yet I am not without my fears for the young lady. Whatever may be her hopes or prospects in life, I can hardly think that she is happy."

Braxton did not pretend to sift the knowledge of his host any further. He inferred from the conversation he had just held with him that whatever that individual might have been able to learn from Agnes herself, he had at least been told more about her by Captain Lamberton than he was willing to discover. Braxton half suspected that a scheme was in operation to coerce Agnes into measures to which her calm consent and acquiescence would never be gained. To meet this scheme, and to defeat it, he was in a great measure prepared, and had just been sounding the old padre for the same purpose; but he would rather, if possible, that its final prosecution should be delayed somewhat longer. How far his host had made himself accessory to the purposes of Captain Lamberton he could not tell, but he had every reason to believe, from the knowledge he possessed of his character, from the sentiments he had just uttered, and from the little advantage he could hope or desire to realize in his old days from the rewards of iniquity, that he would not willingly give his consent to any measure that he knew was calculated to do a serious injury to his guest. Under these circumstances



Braxton was induced calmly to wait the issue of a state of things which he had been some time watching with the most earnest vigilance, and which he knew was about to terminate in a manner that would prove of the utmost consequence to the principal parties concerned.

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## CHAPTER XL.

BLAKELY and Maxwell, the two men who had been employed by Captain Lamberton as a guard to watch the treasure deposited in his fortified bank at San Francisco, and who had accompanied Agnes in the carriage which conveyed her to the mission of Dolores, took their departure early in the morning after having arrived at that station. Braxton was persuaded that Captain Lamberton had some other object in view than merely to employ these men as sentinels over a weak and defenseless girl, and in this opinion he was confirmed by seeing them depart in a different direction from that which had brought them to Dolores. They took their course immediately toward the solitary ranche or public house on the roadside where, as our readers will recollect, they lodged with Percy Courtland, under the same roof, at the time he was employed in conveying the treasure from Sacramento City to San Francisco. As soon as they arrived at this house they called for whisky, and commenced drinking. The result, of course, was what is uniformly experienced on all similar occasions. In a short time they became heated with liquor, and they began to talk at a most furious rate.

“Saunders!” said Blakely, addressing himself to the landlord, “you are as ignorant of the right way of living in this blasted hole you inhabit as you are of the passes leading through the Rocky Mountains. Your trade is as beggarly as that of the old padre at the mission yonder, whose beans and potatoes are the only staple articles of commerce on which he can depend for a livelihood, the one half of which he gives away, and the other half of which



rot in the ground for lack of some one to take care of them."

"And yet, Martin Blakely," answered the host, "you know well enough that I occasionally meet with some good returns from my customers. There is Captain Lamberton, for instance. He pays twenty shillings in the pound for a little hocus-pocus, the first cost of which stood me just nothing at all."

"Nothing but the wear and tear of a damaged conscience, which you brought with you from the City of New York," said the other, "and which has now grown so utterly reckless that I am afraid at the next application it will have fallen more than fifty per cent. in the market. Now, Saunders, I am for sustaining the respectability of the guild, as they call it—that is, I go in for the dignity,—ay, the dignity, mind you,—of the profession. Captain Lamberton employs us to assist him in accomplishing his high-handed schemes of villainy, and to watch the heaps of yellow dust which he buys in at a price below par. Is it not right that, as members of the firm, we should come in for an equal share of the profits?"

"Doubtless, we must look at the equity of the thing, Martin," rejoined Saunders. "But I have already told you that I thought Captain Lamberton was vastly generous. What special work have you done for him without being paid for it?"

"Ay, what special work, indeed? for that's the question," answered Blakely. "Have we not been his tools—his instruments, as I may say? Answer that, Reuben Maxwell. Have we not helped him to lock up and imprison—which I say it was a burning shame to do—two helpless girls, who, because they were friendless, Saunders, and had no person to stand up in their defense, he fairly kidnapped, as if they were no better than the thieving savages who carry off our property? Have we not, moreover, been engaged, under his particular instructions, in transporting these poor creatures round the country, and in keeping a young man in close confinement, on a charge which, if it were not, Saunders, for our damaged consciences, you and I might say has no truth in it?"

"And have we not, moreover," rejoined the other confederate, "combined with you, Mr. Saunders, under this



very roof, to fasten a low and disgraceful crime on another individual for no other reason than merely because Captain Lamberton is pleased to have it so, and finds it necessary in order to complete his general scheme of villainy? Why, look you, boys, these are services which a vigilant police would register as coming from rogues of a high order, and who deserved to fill a large space in the eyes of the community."

"Yes, Saunders!" exclaimed Blakely, "Reuben is right. Our professional skill is everything. In a country like this it ought to meet with its reward."

"Why, that is just what I have said," answered Saunders. "I hope your employer has not been wanting in liberality."

"Wanting in liberality?" answered Blakely. "Why, no! It would be wrong to say that he has not some sense at least of our merits. But he sets us down as vulgar—he does not know how to value us by strict measure according to our accomplishments. And in a case so truly vexatious and disheartening as this—in a case, Saunders, where you know you are wronged, despised, imposed upon—where you are not treated like a gentleman—why, what is to be done, sir?"

"I know of but one remedy," observed Saunders, "and that is to strike for higher wages."

"To strike for higher wages!" exclaimed Blakely. "Ah, my dear fellow, I know a trick worth two of that. Yours is but a clumsy contrivance of the shabby mechanic—a contrivance by which he bites off his own nose to save his face. It would be better to command higher wages, Saunders. I say to *command* higher wages."

"And how may that be done, I pray, Mr. Blakely?" returned Mr. Saunders. "If in your language to command means to compel, I am greatly at a loss to know how you would accomplish your purpose."

"Explain it to him, at once," cried Maxwell, "and don't be bobbing round him as if you were angling for a trout in troubled waters. See here, Saunders——"

"Hush, now! do hush!" exclaimed Blakely. "Let me alone, Reuben! Do you take, Saunders? I say do you understand what I mean when I say we must command higher wages?"



"I am not sure that I do," returned Saunders. "Perhaps you can make your meaning plainer."

"Exactly so," said Blakely. "Then there it is—there, I say, is the evidence of my authority—the fruits of my command—the golden harvest of my own will."

So saying he threw down several valuable pieces of bullion, which altogether would have amounted to a sum of no inconsiderable magnitude.

"Do you see that, Saunders?" he continued. "That is a part of the legitimate spoils deposited in the strong vaults of Captain Lamberton,—that is, of Captain Lamberton and others, the present company included. We all belong to that company, and we all have a right to enjoy the spoils. Do you understand me now, Saunders?"

"I am afraid I do," replied the landlord, "and only wonder how you will attempt to justify your conduct."

"Haven't I explained that already?" said Blakely. "We took it as partners—as share-holders—as men who had been placed to guard the spoils—to fight for them, if necessary, and to suffer for them. Reuben and I took our part of the plunder, and there is an end of it. He can explain. Now let us take another drink."

Here a short pause took place in this remarkable conversation, during which our old acquaintance, Mr. Stanley, with his daughter Letitia hanging on his arm, entered the apartment.

"I have taken the liberty to attend to my own horse," said Mr. Stanley to the landlord, "and have been some time engaged at the outside of the house in loosing him from the harness, and placing him at pasture. Will you have the goodness to show us into another room?"

The landlord conducted Mr. Stanley and his daughter into the only other apartment which belonged to the lower story of the building, after which he passed out of the house, and went round to the spot where that gentleman had confined his horse. He started a little when he observed the exact position his newly-arrived guest must have occupied while he was engaged in these preliminary arrangements before entering the inn. He was persuaded that in all probability he had stood throughout the whole time near an open window which looked out from the room where the conversation we have narrated had just taken



place, and close to which the three men were incautiously stationed during the period they were engaged in speaking. He trembled when he thought with what force and vehemence they had expressed themselves, and how likely it was that Mr. Stanley had overheard every word that was uttered on the occasion.

The landlord's fears were not without foundation. As soon as Mr. Stanley found himself alone with his daughter he proceeded to address her in the following language:

"This house presents a very forbidding appearance, my dear, and the conversation we have just overheard fills my mind with terror and apprehension. The men in the other room must be little better than outlaws and ruffians. They did not distinctly define the business in which they are engaged, or the employments which have recently occupied their minds, but they said enough to alarm my imagination with the most painful forebodings. I shudder at the danger of poor Miss Russell and her companion. And then to think that the man from whom this danger is to be apprehended is Captain Lamberton, the very person whom we have been invited to meet to-day as a friend and companion, and whom we have regarded in this community as an upright and respectable member of society. Good God! is it possible that this world contains so much baseness and duplicity?"

"Perhaps, after all," answered his daughter, "your alarm may be premature. These men no doubt are bad enough, but for that very reason they may have causelessly and maliciously become the slanderers of Captain Lamberton. And so far as regards Miss Russell, they have not even mentioned her name. The females alluded to by them may be altogether different persons from those we supposed.

"I wish I could think so," said her father. "But you know that rumors have reached our ears for some time past of a nature that only go to confirm these suspicions. Every day the evidence seems to be growing stronger that poor Agnes is involved in some strange distress with which Captain Lamberton seems to be intimately connected. From reports, too, which have reached our ears during the last three or four days, and which the conversation of these fearful men would only seem to render more



alarming, there is too much reason to believe that her brother is in some way or other involved in the same difficulties."

"And yet I hope that these uncertain conjectures may turn out to be unfounded at last," said Miss Stanley.

"I hope so too," replied her father. "And we must look for a solution of our doubts to circumstances that will soon unfold themselves. In the mean time let us hasten from this disagreeable place—these terrific men—as soon as possible. I am just as anxious to escape from hence as I am to know why we should have been sent for by Captain Lamberton."

In accordance with this determination, as soon as his horse had done feeding, Mr. Stanley had him again attached to the carriage in which they were traveling, and he and his daughter rode away together toward the mission of Dolores.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

"THE perplexing drama," said Captain Lamberton to himself, as he paced a little antechamber fronting the old decayed building that stood on the mission ground,—“the perplexing drama, whose incidents and characters I have endeavored to mould to my own wishes, is about to terminate, but as yet with no certainty as to the final issue. I wish I could understand its closing scenes a little more clearly. I am no coward, and do not seek to become alarmed at the uncertain shadows which after all may be but the creations of my own troubled fancy, but I cannot help wishing that the whole performance was fairly over. This very morning I have heard of rumors that might startle a man of stronger nerves than my own. Young Courtland is said to be at large. Blakely and Maxwell, it is hinted, have in their fits of intoxication openly avowed their hostility to my interests, and have even gone so far as to plunder the treasure that was placed under their charge. The boy Fairview does not hesitate to assail my character in terms the most bitter and offensive, and I am



told has talked of calling me to an account before the Committee for the part I have acted toward Agnes Russell." Then, after a short pause, he continued: "But she is safe—is safe under this very roof—and I think I may count with certainty on the unshaken fidelity of Braxton. If I can but continue to command the services of this individual, his influence must either change altogether from what it has been, or it will go far to overrule the disorders which threaten me with such serious mischief. And yet somehow or other I feel as if I was surrounded by the most fearful dangers—as if I was standing on the brink of a terrible precipice, ready to be swept into the awful chasm that is yawning beneath me. I cannot tell how it is that I am so easily alarmed by the slightest apprehension of evil. I sometimes almost wish that I could unravel the web that I have so blindly, perhaps so wickedly, woven for others, but into which my own feet seem about to be entangled. But still I do not feel as if my first purpose originated altogether in a corrupt heart. I have been led on from step to step, until my confirmed selfishness has fallen a prey to temptation. How then? Shall I return? Alas! I find it is as difficult to retrace my steps as to go forward. The war that is so hotly carried on in my own mind is wasting and consuming me. I am a miserable man—perhaps I am a more miserable transgressor, for it is written that the way of the transgressor is hard. But I said I was no coward, and yet these gloomy reflections must be the effect of some kind of weakness. I will try to overcome it." Then hastily opening the door of the little apartment in which he had been promenading, and raising his voice, he exclaimed, "Padre! my good padre! I wish to see you a moment."

The old man came, and bowed low to Captain Lamber-ton, whose arrival at the mission had taken place about an hour before.

"Have you prepared the young lady for my coming?" said the captain, with some marks of uneasiness in his countenance. "Have you made known to her the circumstances about which I conversed with you when I was last here, and has she agreed to comply with my wishes?"

"The young lady will not be talked to," said the padre in return. "She is melancholy and silent, and I am afraid



is very much afflicted. At any rate, whatever may be the cause, she declines answering any of my questions, and prefers communing with her own thoughts."

"Did you press home to her, my dear padre, the danger to which she is exposed—the punishment and disgrace which await her friends—the loneliness and destitution of her own condition—if she should continue to remain obstinate?"

"I have set it all before her in as strong language as I could," said the old man, "but with no more effect than if I had been appealing to yonder solid mountain."

"Did you tell her," said Lamberton, raising his voice, and assuming an attitude of authority, "that I *must* be obeyed, and that she would offend both you and me if she attempted merely to consult her own wishes on the subject?"

"No, Captain Lamberton!" answered the pious confessor, "that I did not say, and would not say for the world. I left her at liberty to consult her own feelings in a matter that so intimately concerned her own happiness. It would be unreasonable that either she or I should be compelled to favor the views of another person in opposition to the sentiments of our own free choice and approval."

"Ay! ay!" exclaimed the captain, choking with rage and vexation, and scarcely knowing what he said, "then you, too, are a traitor! But I have done with you. Go to the old summer-house yonder, and tell Braxton I wish to see him immediately."

The old man followed the instructions he had received, and Braxton was prompt in obeying the summons.

"It is on you, my dear Braxton," said the captain, "that I must depend alone, I believe, for consolation and assistance under my present difficulties. Reports, I am sorry to say, are in circulation to-day not a little calculated to alarm my fears, and fill my mind with the most disagreeable apprehensions. Blakely and Maxwell, in whom I placed almost implicit confidence, have succeeded, it is supposed, in plundering the property confided to their keeping. Courtland has made his escape, in all probability through the connivance of these very rogues who have run away with the plunder. Molton Fairview, as I



have been told, has not only abandoned my interests, but has become my bitter enemy, and threatens to expose me to the Committee. Even the old padre here has turned toward me a cold shoulder. But all this will only serve to set off your own faithfulness to greater advantage—nay, it will give you the opportunity of more successfully exercising those remarkable talents which you have so long devoted to my service. It will be necessary, however, to proceed with great caution at present. Blakely and Maxwell must be suffered to run at large until we shall have made use of them before the Committee as witnesses. We may easily have them arrested for larceny afterward. But their testimony will be strong on the subject of Courtland's breach of trust, and will have a powerful effect without requiring them to commit downright perjury. Your own deposition in regard to the amount of gold received at the bank will go far to corroborate and confirm the statement. It may be, however, that none of this testimony will be wanted. And now let me ask you how far you have brought this stubborn girl to listen to reason? Has she agreed to accede to the terms I have proposed—or is she obstinately bent on involving herself and her friends in ruin?"

"I can hardly return a satisfactory answer to your question," said Braxton. "The old padre, since my arrival here, has appropriated her company to himself during the greater part of the time, and uniformly declared to me that she continued unyielding and inflexible—or what I regarded as the same thing, that she remained obstinately silent. Under these circumstances, I thought it better not to interfere, especially as I was told that she preferred being left alone in her apartment."

"Nay, my dear Braxton," said Lamberton, "you surely then did not act with your usual energy and wisdom. You should have insisted on seeing her. But go now and use your utmost endeavors to bring this perverse creature to reflection and reason. Tell her that but one single hour yet remains for deliberation, and that on the conclusion she shall see proper to come to during that time must depend her future happiness or misery. Give her to know that Stanley is on the way, and may probably arrive within the next half hour. You understand me."



"Bravely !" replied Braxton, "and I will take care that Miss Russell shall understand you equally with myself."

Braxton had withdrawn but a short time before Mr. Stanley and his daughter arrived at Dolores. They were ushered into the apartment intended for the accommodation of strangers by Captain Lamberton himself, and were soon apprised of the motives which had induced that gentleman to summon them on a visit to the mission.

"In the present unsettled and unimproved state of society in this country," said Captain Lamberton, "it is impossible, even in regard to objects of the highest interest, that we should stand much on form or ceremony. Besides, you know, Mr. Stanley, that I have always been a man of but few words, and have aimed at accomplishing my purposes by the simplest and most direct means. Permit me, therefore, to inform you, on the present occasion, without any further preliminary remarks, that I am about to enter into a union with a young lady who is now in this house, and that I desire you will at once officiate at the marriage ceremony."

"Most certainly I shall take great pleasure in complying with your wishes," returned Mr. Stanley, "provided the young lady herself is willing, and joins with you in making the same request."

"Of course," answered Captain Lamberton, "a measure of such delicacy and importance could not be solemnized without her consent. But here comes one whose assurance I hope will satisfy you on that score."

At that moment Braxton returned from performing the visit he had undertaken at the instance of Lamberton, and entered into the apartment where Mr. Stanley and his daughter were now assembled. After saluting these individuals, with whom he had previously formed some acquaintance in the City of San Francisco, he was addressed by the captain, and requested to say what answer Miss Russell saw proper to return to the message of which he had been the bearer.

Although Mr. Stanley had already become sufficiently alarmed, and had, in his own mind, fixed on Agnes Russell as the person with whom Captain Lamberton was desirous of forming this union, yet the moment her name was plainly mentioned he looked with great concern at his



daughter, whose anxiety and embarrassment were as truly depicted in her own countenance.

"It is even so, then," said Mr. Stanley, after a moment's pause, "that Miss Russell is the young lady with whom you expect to enter into this important engagement?"

"Yes," replied Captain Lamberton, "Miss Russell is that young lady, and as she has had some previous acquaintance with your daughter, I hope that Letitia will give her free consent to wait on her on the present occasion."

"There can be no objection to that, I suppose," said Mr. Stanley, "provided everything else is found to be right. But it appears you sent Miss Russell a message. Let Mr. Braxton communicate to us her answer."

"It is contained in a very few words," rejoined Braxton. "She desires to be left alone, or if that cannot be, she prefers appearing before Captain Lamberton and answering for herself."

"Then let her be brought at once," said Lamberton. "Her scruples and doubts may be easily removed. But stop—it will be better that Miss Stanley should wait on her this time. Do you, miss, repair to her apartment. Tell her we are ready to receive her, and be sure to bring her with you."

Letitia Stanley, of course, felt no little concern for her friend, and was indeed anxious to receive an explanation of this sudden and mysterious business from her own lips. She readily, therefore, listened to the suggestions made by Captain Lamberton, and was prompt in seeking an interview with Agnes agreeably to his instructions.

In the mean time the padre was again sent for, in order, perhaps, that he might become a witness to the ceremony which Captain Lamberton was so desirous should take place, rather than from any feeling of attachment or esteem which that gentleman felt for a man who had so unexpectedly asserted his own independence in his presence. Another person who helped to swell the number of witnesses on this occasion, was the simple old woman who had been appointed to wait on Agnes and her companion during their hateful confinement in the apartments provided for them in San Francisco, and who, in all probability, had been made to accompany Captain Lamberton for the purpose of waiting again on Agnes after she



should be coerced into a measure which was still more hateful to her than the confinement from which she had escaped a few days before.

It was not long before the two females made their appearance, Letitia leading in her companion with a somewhat brighter countenance than she wore when she first set out on her errand, and the latter being so closely veiled that it was impossible to distinguish a single feature by which the identity of her person could be established.

"You are here, Miss Russell," said Captain Lamberton, addressing the figure that was concealed with so much care, and which now seemed to stand with perfect composure before him—"you are here agreeably to your own wishes to answer for yourself. Nothing could afford me more satisfaction than to see you thus willing to enter into an engagement which your voluntary appearance on this occasion sanctions, and your heart no doubt as freely approves. Are you willing that the ceremony, on account of which these persons have assembled here to-day, shall proceed?"

"By all means," answered the person addressed, "if that alone is the condition on which Agnes Russell can enjoy peace and liberty at the hands of Captain Lamberton. But, thank God, that is not the condition now!" she exclaimed, dropping her veil, and exhibiting to the astonished spectators the person of the affectionate and devoted servant-girl, Maggy. "I am free, Captain Lamberton," she continued, "and so is Agnes Russell!"

Lamberton recoiled from the shock he had received with an aching and almost fainting heart. So great was his astonishment that for a moment he found it impossible to utter a single word. He was thunder-struck and bewildered by an occurrence so sudden and unexpected. At length he exclaimed in language that betrayed his own desperation,—

"Be gone! This miserable scheme was not contrived by yourself. By all that is sacred the author of it shall answer to me for his treachery! Gentlemen, leave me—all but Braxton!"

The request so warmly uttered was instantly obeyed, and Braxton and Lamberton were left standing face to face in the same apartment.



It is very certain that the author of the scheme in which Maggy had acted such a conspicuous part, and to which Lamberton made such strong and emphatic allusion, was meant for Braxton—that same Braxton who had served him so faithfully under circumstances that offended his own feelings and judgment—who had entered his service as Billy Braxton, the buffoon and loafer of the neighborhood of Courtland Hall, who grew useful and respectable in his employment as William Braxton of the City of New York, and who afterward became more intimately connected with him as his chief agent in the transaction of much important business in California. Lamberton knew and felt all this the instant he uttered the threat we have recorded above; and before the parties whom he had requested to withdraw had fairly got out of hearing, his mind began to falter in regard to the course he was about to pursue. But for his fears of being wrong he might indeed have attempted to chastise Braxton on the spot, or at least have charged him boldly with what he believed to be his deceit and treachery. The expediency of such a course, however, he was led to doubt on a moment's reflection. As soon therefore as he found himself alone with Braxton, he glared on him like a hyena or panther, but said nothing. Then walking abruptly across the apartment, it seemed to require all his resolution to suppress the resentment he felt disposed to utter. Again he approached his supposed antagonist, and again he retreated from him to a considerable distance. At last he exclaimed,—

“Braxton, I am wretched—I am miserable! I don't know how it is, but I have lost faith in the world, in my nearest friends, in myself, in you—all seems fearful, dark, and frowning. This heart of mine does not beat as it once did—this head of mine does not think as it once did—my whole system is terribly shattered and disordered. And, oh, what a sense of shame and dishonor presses on my spirits, so that I often feel disposed to fly from myself, and to despise the folly and weakness of my own character! Surely I was once a better man than I am now—I was more innocent and more happy. Or may it not be that I was more light of heart—that I was younger, and enjoyed more of the sunshine of youth and of life? No, no!



Braxton! I will not believe that I am one of the worst men in society. I am, it is true, determined in my plans, but only for the purpose of accomplishing a good end. You know what I mean, Braxton. I am indeed selfish, but not more selfish than other men."

"If you are no worse than other men," said Braxton, "then you ought to be no more unhappy."

"You are right," he replied; "and I hope you will find hereafter that I am not more unhappy. But you must remain my friend, Braxton. This girl may still be conquered. It will not do to give her up yet. I know that so long as she does not find her brother she will continue to remain in this country. Meet me at Sacramento City, for it is there my schemes must have their final and complete accomplishment."

We must not suppose that Braxton at any time viewed Lamberton's conduct, when he came properly to understand it, with unconcern and indifference. But that individual was not fully apprised of the captain's schemes, although he had been made accessory against his will to carrying them on, until almost the last moment before they left the City of New York; and when they arrived in California he became too well acquainted with the influence Lamberton was able to exercise there, particularly with the Grand Committee who were about to assemble at Sacramento City, to attempt to interfere for the rescue of Agnes until he himself had so far matured his own plans as to be able to counteract those of that gentleman. How far this was brought about will be seen in the sequel. In the mean time let it be remembered also that Braxton made some important communications to Mr. Marshfield, which in all probability would have been the means of protecting Agnes and her companion had not that gentleman unfortunately died on his passage to California.

When Captain Lamberton and Braxton separated, the latter continued to remain in the apartment they had occupied, which was shortly after entered by Mr. Stanley.

"We meet with many things in this world to surprise and alarm us," said Stanley, "but I think I was never more sorely distressed and puzzled than I have been by the disclosures that were made to us this morning. It was long ago observed by the ancient world, that whom the



gods intend to destroy they first make mad. The truth of this remark will hold equally good in modern times if, instead of the word gods, we substitute the more familiar and appropriate term, evil spirits. Surely Captain Lambert is laboring under a degree of madness, the source of which can only be looked for in the infernal regions. I had met with some rumors of his absurd conduct before, but I never expected to hear him confess himself a determined and reckless madman, as he has so strangely done this morning. And then it would seem that, not satisfied with the failure of his purposes, he is determined to prosecute his schemes of mischief in a manner calculated to render him still more ridiculous. He would appear to be driven by his evil genius to perfect desperation, and like all madmen it is necessary that we should set a watch over his conduct. Although we may hope that he will not finally succeed in his insane projects, yet it may be well to restrain him as far as possible from the commission of those intermediate acts of mischief, which otherwise might fall with dreadful force on the heads of the defenseless and innocent."

"We have taken such measures," answered Braxton, "as will be most likely to counteract his schemes of villainy. But, as you say, he must be watched, and we cannot be too diligent in our endeavors to oppose his wickedness. Let me beg of you, therefore, Mr. Stanley, to repair at once to Sacramento City, in order that you may be one of the first to meet at that place with the Grand Committee, and prepare their minds for what may be expected to follow. Leave the rest to me. His design is to compel her to yield to his wishes, by attacking the characters of those whom she most loves and esteems. But this I trust may be prevented, if we are but energetic and prudent in using the means within our power. And now farewell till I meet you before the Committee."



## CHAPTER XLII.

IT was raining, and the copious showers that fell from the clouds streamed again in torrents from the caves and dark ravines of the precipitous hills that formed a portion of the Mokelumne mines. It continued to rain incessantly, so that the sky above, as well as the earth beneath, seemed to be hid in a deluge of water, like that which we may suppose constituted the beginning of the ancient flood. Two individuals were sitting at the base of one of these hills, exposed to the peltings of the pitiless storm, but without appearing to be affected by the uproar around them any farther than to aim at gaining a somewhat more rising piece of ground, in order that they might escape the increasing inundation which seemed to be gaining on them in every direction. One of these persons was a good deal younger than the other, but both presented the same marks of gloom and disorder in their countenances, like the dark clouds above them, which seemed to sympathize in their sorrows and misfortunes. Their outward persons were drenched to the skin, but their inward spirits were steeped in a still greater depth of wretchedness and misery.

"You and I, young man," said the elder of these persons to the other, "seem to have been destined to an equal share of bad fortune in this inhospitable country. It is somewhat remarkable that our adventures have been so much alike, and have savored in a great measure of a peculiar character. Like the rain that is falling around us, our discouragements have been incessant and overwhelming. We have all along been as thoroughly drenched by our bad luck as we have this day been drenched by the rain."

"Why, yes," observed the other; "I think we have both been fully well paid up for the blindness and presumption of our conduct,—you for abandoning an amiable wife and children, and I for running away from my parents and brother."



"And yet," replied his companion, "we might bear it all, and might even bear it cheerfully, too, had we not been exposed to the loss of our good names as well as of our good condition in the world."

"True! true!" cried the younger, "that may certainly be considered as the severest stroke of all. Gracious God! what a fool I have been! Once so safe, so blest, so happy! So beloved by parents and friends; so esteemed by the world! In the enjoyment of the purest pleasures of life, I had the prospect of lasting felicity before me. But now I suffer under a gloomy future and a blasted name, and without the power of effecting the least change! Oh, if I could but arise like the prodigal son,—could but cease feeding on the miserable husks that have fallen to my lot here,—how willingly would I return again to my father's house, and there learn obedience from the past, and seek for encouragement and hope from the future!"

"Alas!" cried the elder of the two, "the misery you describe in such warm language may be great, but in what way will it compare with the misery of a husband and a father? Your heart, indeed, is young and tender, but has yet to learn the holy sympathy of conjugal attachment,—the soft affection of parental love. When the endearing ties that bind these feelings to their objects are sundered, where, in any other part of this wide world, can we look for consolation? When the polar star ceases to shine, by what light may we seek to steer our frail bark over the stormy ocean? When the center of attraction is gone, how may we escape the confusion and misery of a disordered motion? No, young man! your spirit may be burdened and sad, but it can never feel like the heart of a husband and father; it can never know the tender concern, the exquisite anguish of parental solicitude. And even if it could for a season realize an emotion so sacred and so solemn,—if it could rise with a temporary fervor to the experience of a bliss or sorrow so strong and ecstatic,—how soon would its sensations be deadened again by the pursuit of worldly baubles and ever-varying frivolity! Your bosom may be filled with emotion to-day, but a thousand new thoughts and new pleasures may arise to dampen and destroy its feelings to-morrow."

"What you now say may be true," rejoined the younger



sufferer, "and yet there may be sufficient reasons, too, to doubt the soundness of your homily. We all know how each individual of mankind is apt to think his own fortune worse than that of his neighbor, and his own sufferings greater than those of all the world beside. But let us cease discussing a subject from which neither of us can derive much benefit. It is not absolutely necessary that we should make ourselves acquainted with the sorrows of others, but it is of the utmost consequence that we should learn how to bear our own. The ability to do so I think we have the power to acquire, just as we have learned how to endure this terrible rain without the least murmur or complaint. And yet I must confess that I would sooner enjoy with you some more comfortable spot than this, and therefore suggest the propriety of seeking shelter together in our tent."

The white tents erected for the miners could be seen at a distance, stretched out on a level plain, but at that moment affording but an insecure protection to their inmates on account of the furious storm without, and consequent inundation. Thither, however, the two weather-beaten and, as it would seem, heart-stricken adventurers directed their steps. They entered one of the tents, which, owing to its being placed on a rising eminence, seemed to be better secured against the elements than the rest.

"Welcome, Percy, my boy!" exclaimed a rough voice, as soon as the younger of the two individuals had entered the tent,—“welcome to the safest retreat that can be found in these diggings. What a comfortable thing it is to be in possession of a clever shelter from the weather! You would have passed us but for that advantage, and would have slunk away to your own hole to pour upon the mud that bubbles by, or perhaps to ruminate on the probable chances of contracting a tertian ague. And here, too, is our friend Horace Baldwin. Come in, Horace, and repose awhile from the fury of the enraged tempest without. Why, by all that is wonderful, our tent is honored to-day by two of the most remarkable men in California,—one of whom escaped the vengeance of an infuriated mob, and the other the confinement of a private prison,—two of the worst foes, as we all know, to the peace and happiness of California society. Come in, and let me introduce you to my brave associates. Here's Molton Fairview, the young baby who



is always crying after his mother, but whose luck has taken a remarkable turn lately, perhaps on that very account. I forgot, however, that he was your good angel when you were on the point of being murdered, and that he saved you, in the last extremity, from the vox populi. And here's Martin Blakely and Reuben Maxwell, with whom I have just been taking a game at all-fours. You know, Horace, the mines are flooded, and for the present our occupation's gone. So we are compelled to seek for employment in whatever company and in whatever place we may be able to find it. Come in, sir, come in, and show that you have sense enough to get out of the rain!"

The reader will understand from the above harangue, delivered with so much life and spirit, that one of the persons we had just before introduced to his notice was none other than our good friend, Percy Courtland, and the other, that unfortunate individual whom the mob at one time, in San Francisco, was about to offer up, if not on the altar of Themis, at least on the gibbet of Lynch-law, which to them was precisely the same thing. Nor, perhaps, would he be long in guessing that the kind creature, who gave them such a warm and hearty welcome, was Darsie Hopkins, the honest reveler, who on a former occasion was so lavish in providing a feast for the same Percy Courtland and Molton Fairview.

Percy was at first somewhat astonished to find that his fellow-adventurers among the placers of California had entered into such familiar companionship with the two suspicious-looking men whom he had met at the public inn on the roadside a few weeks before, and whom he afterward saw standing guard at the fortified citadel in San Francisco. In a few moments, however, he received a satisfactory explanation of their conduct. Molton Fairview led him and Baldwin back to a little apartment or recess, formed in the rear of the tent, and communicated to them the following intelligence:

"These men," said he, "we have been requested to watch, for the purpose of making some discoveries which will become important topics of discussion at the approaching session of the Committee. In the mean time we have been intrusted with the charge of restoring to the bank in San Francisco the treasure which was originally committed



to your care, and so mysteriously diverted from your possession, but which has since fallen into the hands of one of the members of the Committee. Our instructions, derived from that member, have relation to a great variety of matters, in which we must all feel a deep interest. As to you, Baldwin," he continued, "we are desired to employ you as a guard over the movements and conduct of Saunders, the landlord. Keep him in your eye, so that he may be produced before the Committee at any moment that may be required."

"And so far as regards myself," said Percy, "I presume that I have no other alternative than to assume the character of a supposed criminal, and either consider myself outlawed from the pale of California society, or surrender myself to the good pleasure of those who assert the right of sitting in judgment on my conduct."

"It is for your sake, my dear Percy," answered Molton Fairview, "and for the sake of those whom you love, and who love you in return, that the proceedings to which I have just adverted have been principally set on foot. Several of the Committee already know that it is your determination to appear before them, and they have no doubt that a careful investigation of the matters alleged against you will establish your innocence."

Before Molton separated from Percy and his companion he gave them to understand how fortunate he had been for the last few weeks in prosecuting his labors among the mines. Although he had changed very considerably in appearance during that period, and was evidently becoming more manly every day, he seemed still to cherish the same warm affection for his mother that distinguished his character and conversation when we first became acquainted with him. On the present occasion he could not help again remarking, with all the forwardness and frankness of juvenile simplicity, "It will be a great thing when I see my mother. How thankful we will be, and how happy!"

When they passed to the anterior part of the tent, Percy found Hopkins and his two companions again deeply engaged in attending to the contingent hazards of the game of all-fours. He could not but notice that there was a considerable display of gold on the table; and a knowing



wink from Darsie convinced him that there was some design at the bottom of this profuse show of the precious metal, which, just at that moment, perhaps he was not at liberty to explain.

In two or three days after this occurrence, Molton Fairview and Darsie Hopkins called on Percy, in order to take leave of him at his own tent. They both urged him to maintain a cheerful spirit, and not to feel too much concern on account of the transactions in which he had been recently engaged, and in which he had been made to act such a strange and mysterious part. "It will all come right, Percy," said Hopkins. "Not only will your own character be vindicated, but the character of another person, in whom you feel an extraordinary interest, will rise higher in your estimation, if possible, than it ever did before."

These last words of Hopkins made a deep impression on Percy's mind, and, after his two friends had gone, he continued to reflect on them with intense interest. "To whom did he allude?" thought Percy. "To whom could he allude but to Agnes Russell, that heroic girl whose fate seems to be so mysteriously identified with my own, and whom fortune has so wonderfully connected with my recent and extraordinary adventures in this far-distant country. She too, like myself, has been sorely tried from causes which are yet to be explained, and which it would seem have some relation to the approaching investigation which is to be instituted concerning my own character. Well, it is my duty, as I have been told, to cultivate a cheerful spirit and to exercise patience. In a few days more these mysteries will be cleared up, and my bosom be relieved from its present suspense and anxiety."



## CHAPTER XLIII.

DURING the excited state of feeling in which the mind of Agnes Russell had been kept while preparing to leave the gloomy apartment in which she had been confined by Captain Lamberton, she was able so far to control and govern her emotions as to keep them concealed from the observation of Maggy, as well as from Braxton, with whom she had had two or three interviews a short time before. But the moment she reached the hotel in San Francisco, in the manner we have described, and found herself alone in the same apartment she had formerly occupied, she burst into tears, and gave full vent to the burden of grief that was preying on her distressed bosom. The artifice which had been resorted to for the purpose of exchanging places with Maggy, and substituting the person of that faithful creature for her mistress, had been previously concocted between them, and was of her own contrivance. Even Braxton himself had not been permitted to share their confidence and to become acquainted with the secret, nor did he find it out until, after reaching the old mission station, and becoming more clearly apprised of the intentions of Captain Lamberton, Miss Stanley was sent, as we have seen, to sound the mind of Agnes, and to prepare her for that interview which it was supposed by her tormentor was to unite their destinies in this world forever. The great object of this contrivance on the part of Agnes was that she might have an opportunity of making further and more diligent inquiries about her brother. She very well knew that if she could but once succeed in giving him intelligence of her situation he would be prompt in flying to her relief, or that if she could not for the present accomplish more than to establish a correspondence with him, that of itself would be sufficient to secure her in a great measure from the cruel persecution which she suffered at the hands of Captain Lamberton. She did not for a moment doubt the fidelity of



Braxton, but she inferred from hints that he had dropped at the time he was preparing her to leave for Dolores, that such a step as she contemplated would meet with his approbation. Her resolution, therefore, was taken accordingly, and the plot succeeded in the manner we have already mentioned above. In the mean time the landlord at the hotel, although he was surprised to receive the mistress instead of her maid, gave himself no concern to inquire into the matter.

Agnes had written more than one letter to her brother addressed to Sacramento City and to other places, but so far she had not received the slightest intelligence from him, either through the post-office or otherwise. It was matter of great joy to her, therefore, when she was told by the landlord, the very next day after she arrived at the hotel, that he had a letter for her, which a moment afterward he delivered into her own hands. She saw by the post-mark that it came from her brother, and on opening it found its contents to read as follows:

MY DEAR SISTER:

You may imagine my great surprise on receiving a letter from you dated at San Francisco. You say that you had written two or three times before, but I do assure you that this is the first communication from you that has reached me since my residence in California. And oh, how impossible it is for me to express the emotions of my mind on receiving this favor! Is it indeed true that you, my dear, dear sister, are now so near me, and that you have performed an errand on my account that might justly entitle you to be ranked among the greatest and best of women? But let me not in this way attempt to utter my feelings or my thankfulness. I shall only be able to do so, and then but imperfectly, when after the lapse of a few days I shall have an opportunity of meeting you face to face, and folding you once more to my bosom. At present I am prevented from flying to you at once by an occurrence over which I have no control, and which I will explain when we meet. Till then I need hardly say with what strong and abiding regard I remain

Your affectionate brother,

ALFRED.



This letter was dated some considerable time before its reception, and was an answer to one she had written when first held under duress by Captain Lamberton, and which Braxton had undertaken to forward for her to Sacramento City. The possession of this document filled her bosom with the most exquisite rapture. She read it over a dozen times. Kissed it and folded it to her bosom, and then read it over and folded it to her bosom again. "I am to be made happy at last!" she exclaimed. "All my labors and sufferings are to be finally rewarded, for my brother will be here in a few days."

Agnes now spent her time at the hotel with a more quiet and cheerful spirit than she had enjoyed for weeks or months before, and she waited patiently for the arrival of that period when she should be restored again to her brother's embraces, and should have accomplished the sacred purpose for which she had undergone so much labor and suffering. In the mean while Percy Courtland continued toiling with renewed hope and courage in the mines, and was looking forward with the same degree of patience to the time when the Committee should assemble in Sacramento City, and when the truth would be so far elicited as not only to justify his own conduct but to point out with certainty the course necessary for him to pursue in relation to Agnes herself. Until that period should arrive, he believed it to be his duty to remain where he was, although he realized as usual little more than disappointment and fatigue in return for his labor. As to Braxton, he too was busily engaged in concerting measures preparatory to the approaching meeting of the Committee, while at the same time he was in constant correspondence with Percy Courtland, who was greatly influenced by his advice and instruction.

But many days had now passed away, and poor Agnes still lived in fond expectation at the hotel, but without receiving the much-desired visit from her brother. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that her spirits again began to droop. She became more and more anxious, and her mind was agitated with new hopes and disappointments at the opening of every mail. "Surely," said she to herself, "it is but reasonable that he should have been here before this time. Or, if circumstances were really such as



to prevent him from coming, why has he not written—why has he not informed me in some way or other of the difficulties that have rendered his promised visit impracticable? I am again becoming impatient—I am again unhappy!”

It was on one of these mournful occasions—when her spirits were sinking—when her hopes were again forsaking her—that she received an unexpected visit from Captain Lamberton. He entered her apartment abruptly, and without giving her any previous notice of his coming. His manner appeared from the first to be singular—indeed it was almost wild and extravagant. Nor were his looks less remarkable than his behavior. His eyes betrayed a fierceness and restlessness that she had never observed before. His countenance was inflamed, while at the same time it appeared to be pale from the effects of grief and anxiety. But its most remarkable feature was the bitter scorn and wrath with which it glared upon her.

“I have come, Miss Russell,” said he, “to confer with you for the last time. But do not think that I have come as a suppliant. I am not going to bow before you like a love-sick boy who has no manliness, and therefore has no spirit. My heart is still sound, Miss Russell, and my resolution is firm and unshaken. You once thought that I was a doting simpleton,—that I was a distracted fool,—that I was all warmth, all obedience, all devotion, and that you could mould my crazy fondness as you would the youthful passion of a college student. But I tell you, proud upstart, that you have been mistaken. I am a man, miss,—a man of the world,—a man of business,—and you have injured me. I do not seek for vengeance, but neither do I ask for favor. I am too indulgent for the one,—I am too proud for the other. And yet I warn you not to trust me too far. I tell you, Miss Russell, that you have exasperated, but have not subdued me. And now I come to you as a man who will reason, but who will not yield,—as a man who will negotiate, and who can keep his promises without breaking them, but who is determined not to sue for peace. Do you understand me?”

“I would not be speaking the truth if I said I did,” answered Miss Russell. “Surely, Captain Lamberton, you are less rational than you supposed yourself to be. What



have I to do with you as a man of business, or a man of the world,—as a weak man or a strong man? I know of no contract or agreement that we can or should enter into. I owe you nothing, and you are equally free from any obligations to me. All that I ask is to be let alone,—to be suffered to remain unmolested in my own helplessness and sorrow.”

“Yes! yes!” returned Lamberton. “You would have your own will—you would be your own mistress—you must not be spoken to roughly—you must be flattered and coaxed to do that which you ought to do at once from a principle of duty. Who has sought to molest or disturb you? Will you say that I have done so, Miss Russell? I deny the charge,—I am innocent of the offense you urge against me. No! no! proud girl; it is you who have disturbed my own peace,—who have destroyed my own happiness! Have I not sought to raise you from poverty to wealth,—from lowliness to rank and station in life? And how have you attempted to reward my goodness? Tell me, unfeeling creature, what gratitude have you returned for so much kindness on my part?”

“I have done nothing that ought to offend you, Captain Lamberton,—nothing to injure you!”

“Is it nothing to be repulsed!” he exclaimed,—“to be denied the observances of common civility,—to be treated with scorn and contempt, and to be imposed upon by shallow artifices and vulgar disguises!”

“Leave me, Captain Lamberton!” she again exclaimed. “If not for my sake, leave me for your own sake. This useless altercation but inflames your blood and increases your madness!”

“Be it so, then!” he rejoined. “Be it so, unmannerly scorner! It shall happen even as you say. Hereafter I will be mad as the enraged ocean, not with passion, but with revenge. I tell you, Agnes Russell, that if you will not hear me you shall feel me. I will pursue you in spite of all your doublings; I will cast on you shame and disgrace; I will persecute you with cruelty and hatred; and what my madness cannot inflict on yourself, I will inflict on the dearest objects of your love and affection. I will heap reproach and misery on the head of your brother; I will blast the character of your friend and lover. Do you



hear me, miserable creature? Are you acquainted with the persons of Alfred Russell and Percy Courtland? Do you cherish a sisterly affection for the one, and a secret attachment for the other? Know, then, that I have it in my power to ruin them both. And will you do nothing to save them, nothing to save me, nothing to secure your own peace and happiness?"

"Leave me, I beseech you!" said Agnes, rising from her chair. "Oh, leave me, lest I become as wild and as frantic as yourself!"

"And so you shall," he continued with insane passion, "so you shall, obdurate fool!——"

But at that moment a loud knock was heard at the door, and immediately afterward Molton Fairview and Darsie Hopkins entered the apartment.

Captain Lamberton stumbled forward to reach his hat, but as he did so muttered the word vengeance in a tone sufficiently audible to be distinctly heard by the new visitors. He then passed them without speaking another word, but with a countenance so inflamed by passion and feeling that the two young men shrunk back with amazement from a spectacle so truly frightful.

It may readily be imagined with what confusion they were received by Agnes. She had scarce the power to utter a single syllable, but instantly threw herself into a chair and burst into tears.

"We are sorry, Miss Russell," said Molton, "to find you in trouble, but we trust that our presence will not cause you any inconvenience. This is my friend, Darsie Hopkins, a gentleman whom you will respect the more as you become better acquainted with him."

"Thank you kindly, Molton," replied Agnes. "At such a time as this, nothing, you may be assured, could be more welcome than the support and consolation of new acquaintances."

"The person who has just left you," answered Molton, "if I dare judge from what I observed in his countenance, could hardly have been paying you a welcome visit. He, indeed, presented an almost terrifying appearance."

"He certainly caused me more trouble than pleasure," said Agnes, "and you can scarcely imagine how very glad I felt when you came to my relief. I have often thought



about you, Molton, and hardly expected to see you at this time in San Francisco."

"I have been necessarily detained on business," rejoined Molton, "and therefore found little opportunity of visiting this place until very recently. You cannot have forgotten with what interest, on our first acquaintance, I was induced to mention the name of my mother. It is that dear name which still urges me to new labors, and prepares me for new adventures."

"I hope, my young friend," answered Agnes, "that hereafter your labors may become more pleasant, and your adventures less dangerous. I have not yet forgotten the risk to which you were exposed on that melancholy occasion when we were assembled together to consign to the ocean the remains of my guardian and protector, Mr. Marshfield."

As soon as Agnes had pronounced the name of this worthy individual, Darsie Hopkins was observed to change color, and to turn his face with more fixed attention toward the speaker. But as he did not attempt to interrupt the conversation, Molton continued to answer her as follows:

"And I shall never forget who it was that rescued my own body from a watery grave, and restored it again to life, and to its wonted consecration of serving a beloved mother. I often wish that in return for your noble conduct on that occasion I could grow at once to years of riper manhood, and could assume the same relation toward you that was held by Mr. Marshfield."

At this stage of the conversation Hopkins again gave signs of feeling a deep interest in the remark that had just been made, and now ventured to interrupt the speakers.

"You have twice mentioned the name," said he, "of Mr. Marshfield. Be good enough to inform me, a little more particularly, who this Mr. Marshfield was, and by what given name he was known to his friends and companions."

"I am sorry to say," answered Agnes, "that although at the time of his death, owing to the peculiar circumstances under which I was then placed, I regarded him as the dearest and best friend I had in the world, I had made myself but little acquainted with the history of his life and



the relation in which he stood toward other people. I only knew that his baptismal name was Walter, and that at one period he was the confidant, if not the agent for some purposes, of Captain Lamberton."

"Good God!" exclaimed Hopkins, "the person you speak of must be the same,—my very dear and honored uncle. And is he, indeed, dead—and must I despair of seeing him again in the land of the living? I had hoped to meet him in San Francisco on this very visit, and was not before apprised of his death. My poor uncle!"

It was evident that Hopkins was deeply affected by this intelligence, and it seemed for a little while to absorb all his thoughts and feelings. But he soon afterward became calm, and with Molton Fairview began to announce to Agnes the purport of their visit to her on that occasion.

"You must accompany us," said they, "to Sacramento City. The remarkable circumstances attending your fortune in California must be more fully developed at that place, and your own presence will be necessary in an investigation which deeply concerns your future welfare. We have been deputed by your friend, Mr. Braxton, to escort you on your journey, and to become your guardians and advisers after you shall have arrived in that city."

"Alas!" said Agnes, "how can I think of leaving San Francisco at a juncture of so much importance to me as this? I have received a letter from my brother, and have been expecting his arrival in this city every day. It will not do for me to depart hence at present. My brother, I have every reason to believe, will return here soon, and should he happen to come during my absence, it might be the means of separating us again for weeks and for months."

"Your concern for your brother," they answered, "is natural, and altogether praiseworthy, but must be abandoned on this occasion for considerations that are of more general interest, and which are of a more pressing nature. Should your brother happen to arrive in San Francisco during your necessary absence from the city, it will surely be easy for him to inquire about your movements from the landlord with whom you are lodging at present, or you may give him that information yourself by addressing a letter to him before your departure."



Agnes felt confident that the two young men who expressed such a deep interest in her welfare were sincere in their professions. She felt, moreover, that she could hope for but little comfort in her present lonely situation; that it would be better for her to be as near her friends as possible, and that both for Maggy's sake and her own it was altogether desirable that they should again become companions to each other. These considerations induced her at last to submit to the guidance of Braxton and her other friends.

Before Darsie Hopkins left San Francisco, he made more particular inquiries about the affairs of his uncle, Mr. Marshfield, and was happy to find that the captain of the vessel on board which that gentleman died had taken care to secure his effects in such a manner that they had remained entirely safe from the impertinent scrutiny and interference of strangers. The person in whose custody they were left, afforded Darsie every facility he could desire for examining his uncle's papers, and it was soon discovered that he had made his will a short time before his death, and had appointed his nephew his sole legatee and executor. This discovery was not a matter of much surprise to Darsie Hopkins. He knew his uncle had died an old bachelor, and that he had always expressed a very considerable interest in his own welfare and conduct in life. Nor did he at all wonder that his uncle in his will should have accompanied his bequest with such seasonable advice as he thought might be of benefit to his nephew. The old gentleman adverted in plain terms to Darsie's idle habits, but took care to say that he believed this part of his conduct was greatly owing to the manner in which he had been brought up and educated. He remarked at the same time that he thought his nephew was trying to overcome these unfortunate defects in his character, and that on his success in doing so must depend his future prosperity and usefulness. "He reads me like a book," said Darsie, after perusing this part of the will, "and I hope I shall not disgrace his memory by belying the good opinion which he seemed so kindly to cherish for me."

In a few days afterward, Agnes Russell, in company with her two friends, left San Francisco for the interior country. They soon arrived at the mission of Dolores,



where Maggy still continued to remain under the hospitable roof of the old padre, and where she was affectionately embraced again by her mistress.

The approaching assembly of the Grand Committee at Sacramento City was to take place in a few days, and was looked forward to by many with deep concern and interest. It was well known that several affairs of quite weighty importance would come before them for trial and adjudication, and the public mind had been agitated by many strange rumors concerning the part which it was supposed Captain Lamberton intended to act before them. That individual had lately secured to himself a share of attention and remark, which rendered his name familiar in the mouths of many who had never before heard of him. His actions were closely watched, and his conversation was listened to with wonder whenever he was in the company of those who had been best acquainted with his former habits and manners. It was evident that, owing to some cause or other, a great alteration had taken place in his discourse and behavior. His very countenance betrayed an expression of gloom and anxiety which those most familiar with him had never observed before, and it was agreed on all hands that Captain Lamberton had become a completely changed man.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

THE summer was further advanced than it was when we last lingered round Courtland Hall. A beautiful morning broke through the fleecy clouds that floated in the eastern sky, and the bright calmness and serenity that were spread over the surrounding landscape seemed to be welcomed as well by the lowing herds that went forth to crop the dewy grass, as by the tuneful songsters who chanted their hymns of praise on lofty trees, or were still lingering by bush and brake as performers in the general chorus. Roland was already up, engaged in driving a portion of the cattle to the field, or in attending to feeding another part of the stock in the stable. Harry was indulging in a customary luxury,



as pleasant as it was healthy and invigorating, by bathing in a delightful stream not far from the pasture-field to which Roland was driving his cattle; and Virginia Truehope was pursuing her favorite study by collecting flowers on the hills and in the valleys, and classifying them in the catalogue of her private herbarium. Mrs. Courtland and her maids were busy in attending to the affairs of the dairy, while Henry Courtland himself was seated in the porch of his comfortable dwelling, looking with complacency over the cultivated fields and well-timbered woods of his own farm, and occasionally stretching his eyes around in all directions, as if drinking in the beauties of the smiling landscape, now glowing with the bright effulgence of the rising sun. While still engaged in regaling his eyesight with sights and scenes so pure and exhilarating, Harry returned toward the house with the glow of health and pleasure strongly pictured in his countenance, and with a step so sprightly and elastic that it happened to attract the notice of his father.

“I think, Harry,” said Mr. Courtland, “that your lively spirits this morning are almost as good as my own. I don’t know that I ever experienced more true enjoyment than I have done during the last half hour I have been occupying this seat.”

“It is a delightful morning, father,” said Harry, “and one every way calculated to make us all feel happy.”

“I know it is,” answered Mr. Courtland, “and yet I am not sure that it is altogether that either which imparts so much real satisfaction to my bosom at this time. Although but a plain farmer, I think I am able, to some extent, to discern and appreciate the beauties of nature—nay, I am confident that they make a most pleasing impression on my mind. This is another of the great, I was going to say of the choice, privileges, which is granted alone to people living in the country. We may constantly enjoy with our eyes the pleasing pictures of the outstretched landscape—the calm serenity of a summer sky—the glories of the rising sun. And to him who cultivates a taste for pleasures like these, they are the purest and the best that our present imperfect state of being has to give. But there is something more that tends to impart an additional relish to our enjoyments. Not only may we exult



in our own happiness, but that is immensely increased when we come to reflect on the happiness which everywhere exists around us. The songs of joyful birds—the music of humming insects—the chattering of the little busy animals in the woods—are but responses to the joy and gratitude which fill our own swelling bosoms. And then we are called to witness other scenes of happiness, which exist still nearer to our own hearts, and which we share with the domestic animals around us as members of the same household. The calf and the lamb skip up and down in playful vivacity, and give us the strongest evidence of their own felicity. The simple kine low with gladness in the meadows, and the noble horse bounds over the plain with a triumphant exultation which proclaims the fullness of his own pleasure. Even the solemn ox seems to tell us in his frank, open countenance, that he too is happy. Are not these the tokens of a kind and good Providence whose gifts are liberally distributed to all? And while thus witnessing the fullness of love and joy pervading every department of nature, who will say that the farmer is not more blessed in his lot than any other member of the human family? While his wants and cares are fewer, his pleasures are more pure—his discernment is more quick—his sympathies are more warm—his hopes are more exalted—because he traces in all that he hears and sees the goodness and benevolence of his great Creator, whose love and wisdom are constantly employed in making others happy like himself.”

Harry listened to the enthusiastic remarks of his father without attempting to make any reply, not that he himself was insensible to their truth and propriety, but because they recalled to his mind the recollection of one who, he was afraid, had forfeited all the happiness of which his father was so fondly speaking through a perverse obstinacy, and was now, perhaps, without any other enjoyments than those which are grudgingly awarded to care and labor by a cold and unfeeling world. Without discovering his thoughts, however, he merely went on to say, as if he had been accidentally led to converse on a different subject,—

“We are still without any information from Percy, father. How strange it is that my brother does not see proper to write to some of us!”



"I cannot say," answered his father, "that I regard his silence as anything very remarkable. It is sometimes said that misery is fond of company, but in another sense it may perhaps be said with equal propriety that misery is fond of itself—that it willingly refrains from communion with all but its own thoughts and sufferings. Depend on it, that the whole secret of Percy's silence is that he is unhappy."

"It is on that account that I only feel the more concern for him," said Harry. "While we have a pretty correct idea of his real situation, our sympathy and sorrow only become the greater because, from not knowing where he is, it is utterly out of our power to render him any assistance."

"You are right, my son," rejoined Mr. Courtland, "and I am sorry to say that precisely the same remark will hold good in respect to Agnes Russell. She too has long remained silent, her father having received but one or two letters from her since her arrival in California. The conclusion we must come to is the same as in the case of Percy—she is unwilling to write because she is in trouble."

"But I do not see," said Harry, "why it should follow as a matter of course that because a person may be exposed to hardships and sorrows he should therefore be unwilling to communicate with his friends."

"If we know the fact to be so," answered his father, "it is of less consequence, perhaps, that we should become acquainted with the cause of it. And yet if we reflect but for a moment, I think it may not be very difficult to discover what that cause really is. It seems to me that, without inquiring further, we may at once perceive that there are two reasons for such conduct. One of them is that the person who suffers is proud, and is on that account unwilling to let his sufferings be known. The other is, that he knows by disclosing his own sorrows it can have little other effect than to increase the sorrows of his friends."

While Henry Courtland and his son were thus occupied in discussing the reasons for the silence of Percy and their friend Agnes, Mrs. Courtland was engaged on another part of the premises in debating with Mrs. Truehope, in the presence of her maids, the great art and mystery of neat and thrifty housekeeping.



"It would be a fine rule for our girls," said Mrs. Courtland, "if they would only observe it, 'that there is a place for everything, and everything should be in its place.' It is because girls are not generally taught this rule, that there is so much disorder in almost all families. And the sad consequences of this neglect are scarcely ever considered. But who does not know how many husbands become offended and discouraged with their wives, how many sisters lose the esteem and affection of their brothers, how many fair ladies lose the admiration of their suitors, merely because this rule is so universally neglected! The girl that is too careless and inconsiderate to keep her own affairs in order, will hardly possess skill enough to govern a family, or make other people comfortable. A disordered house is a sure sign of a corresponding disorder of the intellect."

"It is more than likely that you are right," observed Mrs. Truehope, "and yet there would sometimes seem to be a remarkable inconsistency between the mind of an individual and the outward acts which distinguish his conduct. There are many persons who are able to reduce their thoughts on almost any subject into the most orderly arrangement, who nevertheless would seem to be utterly at a loss to render them available to the accomplishment of any practical results. Virginia, for instance, will classify and dispose of her plants on paper with the utmost accuracy, but when she is called on to arrange the particulars of some domestic process, or even to place in order the furniture of her own apartment, she is as helpless as a child who is still enduring the restraints of the nursery. While she is able to point out to you the manner in which a thing ought to be done, she altogether lacks the ability of doing it herself."

"But then the mind is still at fault," returned Mrs. Courtland. "While she possesses the understanding of discerning what is right, she lacks the will to reduce her knowledge to practice. Our theories in this world can be of little consequence, unless we attempt to make them profitable by applying them to purposes of usefulness. Hence it is that persons often who think the most are found to accomplish the least. The individual who walks straight forward in a path, will make much greater progress than



he who admires its ease and beauty, and yet pauses at every turn lest his feet should be hurt by the natural inequalities which are inseparable from the ground in all directions."

"Then you would not have persons to think too deeply," said Mrs. Truehope, "on subjects connected with the ordinary duties of life?"

"No," said Mrs. Courtland, "nor on any other subject. But after all it is not so much the thinking too deeply as it is the thinking too much and too long that disqualifies us for the active duties of the world. It is right to think, that is, to think in reason and moderation, but while we are thinking let us not forget to act at the same time. Thought and action should go together like the flash in the pan and the report which is immediately afterward heard from the gun."

"Now, girls," rejoined Mrs. Truehope, addressing herself to two or three maid-servants, who had been listening all the time with good-natured patience to the rather lofty teachings of their mistress, "I hope you understand what Mrs. Courtland has been saying. You must be neat and orderly in the arrangement of everything you have to perform, and must not only think about it, but go right away and do it. And even should you meet with obstacles in your endeavors to discharge your duties faithfully, you must not suffer yourselves to become discouraged. Like the insect who is disturbed in weaving a web for its support and protection, if it is rent and torn by accident, he endeavors at once to remedy the disaster, or if that should be impracticable, proceeds forthwith to construct a new fabric."

The girls made no direct reply to the kind suggestions of Mrs. Truehope, only that they bowed in smiling submission, as if giving their cheerful approbation to what she had said. But a new occurrence now attracted their attention. Just as they were about to separate, Virginia Truehope was seen approaching at some distance, on her return from her morning ramble, accompanied by another female. At first the visitor was supposed to be one of their neighbors, who had taken this early opportunity of doing an errand to Courtland Hall, which it would have been less pleasant to do at a more advanced hour of the



day. On nearer inspection, however, every one pronounced the new-comer to be a stranger, with whom they thought they had made no previous acquaintance. Her appearance was that of a lady who had been traveling in some kind of a conveyance, but which she was obliged to leave on account of its not passing the spot where her journey was to terminate. She was not arrayed in a riding-habit, but her dress was made to come as near to it as possible, and had evidently been worn during a period of some days' continuance. She carried in her hand a lady's traveling basket, and as the two females drew nearer to the house, it was discovered that Virginia was likewise carrying a small carpet-bag, which no doubt belonged to the stranger. A veil covered her face, and as she approached still nearer to the spot where Mrs. Truehope and her companions were standing, Virginia suddenly led her to the rear of the building, which they entered together by a back door.

During the greater part of these movements not a word passed between Mrs. Courtland and Mrs. Truehope, and after the two females had entered the house, the latter lady followed them with some precipitation, accompanied by her friend, Mrs. Courtland. When they reached the sitting-room, the new visitor had already thrown herself into a chair which occupied the center of the apartment; her veil still continuing to cover her face, and her head resting on her hand, as if she was laboring under some great agitation. Virginia was seated in a corner of the room, silent and dejected. But as soon as Mrs. Truehope entered, the stranger arose, threw aside her veil, and rushed into the arms of her mother. It was Clara Truehope—the child who had been lost for so many years, but who was now so suddenly and so unexpectedly restored to the embraces of her fond parent.

It is unnecessary that we should attempt to describe the feelings that were experienced by mother and child on this memorable occasion. They hung in hysterical passion on each other's neck—they sobbed—they laughed—they rejoiced in almost frantic ecstasy—they sunk again into silent and melancholy sorrow. But they soon recovered that calm serenity which, on almost all occasions, follows a state of so much feeling and excitement. Clara of course had changed much in outward appearance. The pale im-



press of grief was spread over her countenance, and her once cheerful and brilliant eyes were now downcast and mournful. But her mother knew her almost at once, in spite of the changes which time and sorrow had wrought in her person. She knew her, or thought she knew her, while still walking with Virginia, and before they drew near enough to the house to be fairly recognized. She knew her more certainly the moment she rose from her seat to fly into her arms, and before they had imprinted the fond kiss of love and affection on each other's cheeks and lips.

After these warm salutations had been exchanged, Mrs. Truehope said to her daughter, "Clara, you once had a husband, and he is now dead. It was not necessary that I should wait for you to tell me that. I knew it the moment I laid my eyes on your person. I knew it by your mournful gait—I read it in your melancholy countenance—but what has become of your child? What has become of that dear boy who it is said resembled you so much, and whom you must have regarded as the treasure and idol of your heart?"

"Alas, mother!" said the disconsolate daughter, "your questions are but the anxious echoes of my own bosom, that would vainly sound the depths of a mysterious Providence. What has become of him? He whose love and wisdom are constantly put forth to make us perfect through sufferings, alone can tell. What has become of him? That question I have asked myself a thousand times, and now that I am restored to the embraces of a fond parent, the question would seem to recur with tenfold earnestness,—what has become of him? I cannot tell. I only know that I had a son—that I had a son whom I dearly, fondly loved, and who as dearly and fondly loved me—but that I now feel as if I were lonely and childless in the world."

The history of Clara, since we last lost sight of her, may be told in a few words. She never left the City of New York, after she removed there with her husband, until the occasion of which we are now speaking, when she returned to the neighborhood which gave her birth. After the failure of her husband in business, they continued to struggle along in a small way for several years, with such means as their industry were able to command. But



these means were never abundant, and were barely sufficient to afford them a decent livelihood. At last they grew more circumscribed, and her husband, as much perhaps on account of the sufferings of his wife as from any other cause, died of a broken heart. Poor Clara would have died of the same disease, and would have soon followed her husband to the grave, had it not been for the son of whom we have just spoken above. That son she loved with all the tenderness of maternal affection. She believed that it was her duty to live for him, and work for him, so long as strength should be granted her for that purpose. She hoped that the time would come when he would make a willing return of her love, and when perhaps in her old age, instead of looking to her for that assistance and support which he now needed, he would be able to gladden her heart by administering to her own wants, and smoothing for her the bed of death. But, alas! how vain and illusory are all our hopes in this life. The boy seemed to be but indifferently pleased with what his mother was striving to do for him. He was either too proud or was possessed of too much feeling to know how to value her benefits. As he grew older he grew more shy of his mother, and became every day more fretful and unhappy. And yet he was by no means deficient in filial affection and obedience, but was merely desirous of exerting his own powers, and asserting his own independence. At last, by incessant importunity, he obtained the consent of his mother that he might absent himself for a temporary purpose from the parental roof, and might be suffered for a time to seek his own fortune. When she gave her consent to this request, she supposed that her child would have returned to her again in a very few days, or a very few weeks. But many days and many weeks had elapsed since they parted from each other—many bitter tears she had shed since their separation—but had heard no tidings of him since. More than a year had now passed since she lost her child, and to the question, what had become of him, she could receive no satisfactory answer. Under these circumstances she was induced to make her situation known to her mother and friends in the manner we have related above. She could not tell how many of her relations were living or dead, but she resolved to ascertain this fact by a personal



visit. She accordingly took passage in the stage from the City of New York, and having reached the point nearest to her former place of residence, she there learned that her mother was living at Courtland Hall, where she arrived, as we have seen, in company with her sister Virginia, whom she overtook on the way returning from her morning ramble.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

WHEN Captain Lamberton broke away from the apartment occupied by Agnes Russell, at the hotel in San Francisco, as we have seen, he was rendered ten times more frantic by the interview he had just had with that persecuted young lady. His malignant spirit now panted for revenge, as much as it before had longed to bring her by force and stratagem into subjection to his will. For the purpose of gratifying this evil feeling, he repaired immediately to the neighborhood of Sacramento City. One of his first objects was, to lay hands on Percy Courtland, and to reduce him to another term of rigorous confinement. He was entirely ignorant of the course that young gentleman was resolved on pursuing, and was not aware that he was just as anxious to appear in the presence of the Committee himself as Lamberton could possibly be to place him before that tribunal. Nor will it seem wonderful to the reader that this base and unhappy individual should have acted with such high-handed arrogance, when he comes to consider the true state of the country at the time these events transpired, and the high position which Captain Lamberton held, or supposed he held, in relation to the temporary and fugitive government then existing in California. It must be remembered that he was a branch of the Committee himself, that he was able to influence the minds of many of its leading members, and that from his local knowledge of the affairs and resources of that new country, he had been looked up to as an important agent in the management of its most prominent concerns. Such



a man, under such circumstances, might easily convince himself that he was possessed of more authority than really belonged to him, and might not only undertake to govern, but might likewise suppose that he was vested with a legitimate right in his own person to censure, to arrest, and even to imprison.

Percy Courtland, after taking leave of Hopkins and Fairview in the way we have already mentioned, continued to struggle with the many serious and discouraging difficulties which attended his circumstances. His taste and disposition were entirely inimical to the mode of life he had been for some time pursuing, and his physical powers, although he was capable of exerting them to great advantage in certain directions, were wholly inadequate to a successful prosecution of his new labors. It was at this period, too, owing to the heavy rains which had just set in, that the most important and profitable operations at the mines had nearly or altogether ceased. Even vigorous and enterprising workmen had to content themselves with meager profits, and others, who were less fortunate, or less determined, met with still worse encouragement to reward their labor. To persons on the spot it was truly distressing to look round on the great number of individuals who were suffering almost every extremity of sorrow from these causes. Many broke down under the severity of their exertions, and without any further struggle yielded themselves victims to the last stage of despondency. Others became afflicted with disease, and without medicines or medical advice—without that soothing kindness in the person of a parent, a relative, or a friend, which sometimes is worth more than the most skillful treatment of the most skillful practitioner—they pined away in hopeless misery until death kindly stepped in to their relief. Others again attempted to escape a feeling of their sorrows by steeping their senses in the inebriating cup, which at last rendered their misery only the more intolerable. Many resorted to the gambling-table, either as a temporary expedient to gain some slight respite from their conscious wretchedness, or as a plausible resort to repair and build up their ruined fortunes. It was astonishing, indeed, to see with what readiness most of these despairing wretches got rid of the moral restraints,



which, but a few weeks or a few months before, had confined them within the paths of honor and rectitude, and which served to render them good members of society at least, although they might not have been good men or good Christians. The time was when they would have shrunk, as from the most loathsome contagion, from everything that was low, degrading, or dishonest. But now, far remote from the pale of serious and dignified society, with none to witness their shame but such as were as vile and degraded as themselves—with no dear relations to interpose between them and disgrace—with no true friends to counsel and instruct—reckless, faithless, and desperate—gaunt famine perhaps staring them in the face—inordinate distress overpowering their better faculties—they yield at once to the arts of the seducer, and are as powerless to withstand temptation as if they were assaulted by a legion of fiends.

All this was pictured before the apprehension of Percy Courtland in colors as real and life-like as if they were the shadowings forth of his own inward soul. But although he had a perfect understanding of what was going on around him, he had no relish and no desire to identify himself either with its madness or its wickedness. He had been early taught to cherish a sacred regard for truth and goodness, and when these were not found he felt himself moving in a sphere that rendered him lonely and unhappy. In order to make such a state of life less intolerable, he was in the habit of taking long solitary walks on the banks of the river, and in directions which led him to a great distance from the immediate location where he and his companions had pitched their tents. Sometimes he was engaged in exploring new regions, where he thought there was a prospect of realizing a greater amount of treasure than was to be found in other places. But as a general thing he aimed at diverting his mind from the difficulties of his situation, and to enjoy that happiness in solitude which experience taught him he could hardly expect to meet with amid the noise and bustle of a miner's camp.

While Percy was thus forced to become as it were his own associate, and to rely on himself as the contriver of his own happiness, Agnes Russell found it no less neces-



sary to indulge in a somewhat similar course of life, in order that she might pass away the time agreeably to herself, which, until the members of the Great Committee should meet at Sacramento City, she was compelled to spend with her companion at Dolores. For this purpose they contrived many means of diversion, which, under the sanction of the old padre, they were permitted to pursue for pastime. Sometimes they would attempt to resuscitate the decayed flower-beds in the mission-garden. At other times they would amuse themselves by gathering the fruits in the vicinity of their habitation, which were as delicious to the taste as they were abundant in every direction within the bounds of that old domain. But their principal source of amusement arose from walking and rambling to remote distances round the country. It often happened that the padre accompanied them on these excursions. But when it was their intention to take a very long walk they usually apprised him of it, and he would then substitute for his personal guardianship his paternal blessing, and would remain at home.

It was on one of these occasions, when they had wandered out alone, and had extended their walk far beyond the limits by which it was usually confined, they came unexpectedly to an open space that for some distance round presented the appearance of a bare common or moor, and which it was evident had at one period or another been occupied by persons who paid some attention to the cultivation of the soil, and who had selected it as a place of habitation. Perhaps it was a spot where the mission of Dolores had been originally established, and was afterward abandoned for the one where Agnes and her companion were now residing with the old padre. In the center rose a building constructed after the manner of the rude architecture of the country, and which, owing to its solid and massy materials, might still afford a somewhat comfortable shelter to the houseless wanderer. Everything but the main edifice, however, had fallen into absolute decay, and scarcely a vestige remained of the surrounding improvements that must once have adorned the place. The old house itself possessed one distinguishing feature, which immediately attracted the attention of the two girls who were so unexpectedly brought to look on it in its de-



sersion and loneliness. It was erected on the margin of a beautiful stream of water, which murmured in soft eddies as it passed, and over which hung a projecting balcony or porch, that ran along the entire extent of that end of the building.

"This is a sight," said Agnes, as soon as they had entered on the waste spot we have been describing, "that I hardly expected to witness in the midst of these lonely solitudes. If you and I were superstitious, Maggy, we might suppose that old deserted building yonder gave shelter to beings that are not of this earth; or if we were as apprehensive of danger as perhaps some females in our situation would be, we might believe it to be the haunt of outlaws and robbers, who infest the immense forests of this wild and ferocious country."

"Hush!" said Maggy. "You almost make me think that we are surrounded by the very beings to which your imagination is giving an existence. Did you not hear a noise?"

"I heard nothing," said Agnes, "but the murmuring fall of the water, or perhaps the rustling of the leaves stirred by the summer breeze."

"Let us walk this way," rejoined Maggy, pointing in a direction toward the old dilapidated building. "I would prefer being closer to that house, or else farther off."

"I am curious myself," said Agnes, "to take a nearer view of this solitary structure."

They now advanced farther on the path they had been pursuing, which brought them to a fuller view of the rear of the building, and directly in front of the balcony that projected over the stream of water.

"It is pleasing to think," observed Agnes, "how that balcony once afforded delight and enjoyment to hearts that were as desolate and sorrowful then as ours are now. The wild and extended view of the surrounding scenery, the loneliness of the sacred spot, and the melancholy plashing of the water below, must have been calculated to soothe the mind into an enthusiasm that was as calm and gentle as it was refreshing to the wearied spirits. It was a spot that methinks a poet or a lover would have selected as exactly adapted to his own solitary habits and musings."

"Yes," said Maggy, "or that a poor girl like me might



have chosen for the purpose of reading my Bible, or at least of counting my beads, if I had been brought up in the faith of those who were its first proprietors."

"See," exclaimed Agnes, "how that tangled vine, at one end of the porch, has woven itself into a bower the most beautiful and romantic that could be imagined! Let us endeavor to reach it. I should like to repose there for a few minutes, if it was only for the sake of tasting its fragrance, and looking down on the transparent stream that so delightfully leaps its way through the shaded banks below."

"Did you not hear something move?" said Maggy, drawing nearer to Agnes.

"I heard nothing, whatever, Maggy," returned her companion.

"And just now," continued Maggy, "I really thought I saw the shape of a human figure pressing against the sides of that thick mass of shrubbery you call a bower. Would it not be strange if, after all, it should turn out to be the harbor of some wild adventurer or outlaw?"

"Do be quiet, Maggy!" cried Agnes. "I myself am beginning to feel as if my fears were getting the better of my reason and judgment."

At that moment two men were seen approaching from a distant hollow or ravine, who were directing their steps in a straight line toward the old building. Another person immediately afterward emerged from a dense piece of forest in an opposite direction.

"Hold!" cried Agnes to her companion in a low voice. "For God's sake do not make a noise, or we shall be discovered! Let us conceal ourselves behind this tree. Perhaps the men may pass on, and we shall be safe."

Maggy was able to obey the instructions of her mistress, although she at first could scarcely be restrained from making an outcry that would have led to their immediate discovery. In the mean time the two men advanced until they stood directly in front of the building, on the other side of that from which projected the balcony and bower. The third person continued to linger in the background, but from his movements it was evident he was connected with the other two, who now stood reconnoitering the old house as if with a design to effect an entrance.



"This is an out-of-the-way affair, altogether," said one of the men to the other, "and looks more as if we were sent to unearth some wild beast from his den than to apprehend the person of a human being like ourselves. Now, it is not every one that could have engaged me in such a mad chase as this. But Lamberton is learning more and more every day how to act like a gentleman, and how to treat men with respect who, on fair grounds, may be considered his equals."

"Just so, Reuben, my boy," answered his companion, "and the consequence is precisely this, that we two must change our tune a little in order to accommodate him in his wild notions. I once thought that I would not do much for him before the Committee, but seeing that he has at last learned what belongs to gentlemen like ourselves, I think, Reuben, we may as well swear up to the mark."

"That is, Martin," said the other, "we will just tell as much of our story as will suit the occasion, and the rest we will keep as our own private property. I am sure that will be neither false swearing nor false dealing. But how shall we manage to get at the fellow inside without his escaping like a fox from the bush? I doubt very much, if he got loose, whether the mad hound yonder could do much to prevent him from flying to cover, and perhaps doing us all a little mischief. Let me see. Here is the door. Now, just keep guard below, Martin, while I go up and scare him from his kennel, which Lamberton says he is always sure to occupy at this time of day."

So saying the younger of these two confederates, whom the reader will by this time recognize as the ruffians Blakely and Maxwell, disappeared at the entrance below, leaving his companion to stand as sentinel during his exploration of the premises. But he had scarcely found his way into the old building before a violent scuffle was heard to ensue. In another moment a heavy body was perceived to fall with a dull noise to the ground, and it was seen that Maxwell had been hurled over the balcony, and lay sprawling in agony on the bank of the stream.

As soon as this catastrophe had taken place, Blakely, on hearing the noise, moved off precipitately to the rear of the building, in order to ascertain the nature of an event so sudden and unexpected. Maxwell was stretched on the



ground as if suffering severely from the effects of the fall, but by the assistance of his companion he was soon raised again on his feet, and seemed to be much less injured than was at first supposed.

"I tell you what, Martin," said Maxwell, "that young fellow is as strong as a bear, and as fierce and nimble as a wildcat. I thought to have led him down-stairs like a lamb, when, behold you, the moment I laid my hand on him he pitched me from him as lightly as if I had been a truant school-boy receiving correction at the hands of an enraged father. Nor do I think he meant to do me very serious harm either, for when I staggered toward the open end of the balcony up yonder, I thought he reached forward and tried to save me from falling. But, to tell you the truth, I was too much for him as well as for myself. My overgrown carcass, when set in motion, pitched forward of its own accord, and came down with a dead weight that seemed to bruise the very marrow in my bones."

"But I hope you are not much hurt, Reuben?" asked the other inquiringly.

"Most certainly," replied the other; "that is what I can hardly give a satisfactory account of myself. Hurt? why, if the injury I have sustained was only half equal to the pains in one of my shoulders, I would say that I had received a most capital hurt. But the thing is just so, Martin. If none of my bones are broken I may do first-rate after all. One thing, however, I have made up my mind about, and that is, I have done with these infernal agencies of Captain Lamberton. It is enough that we are to serve him before the Committee. But as to anything else, why, here I say, on the bank of this memorable stream of water, which I am sure I will not soon forget, I wash my hands clean of it."

"But, my good Reuben," said his accomplice, "is it right that we should desert Captain Lamberton in his present extremity? Do you not see that our prisoner has escaped, and that, in all probability, if he should happen to meet the captain in his flight, he may encounter him with a greeting that will be quite as rough as the one you met with awhile ago?"

"And that may be all true enough," rejoined Maxwell; "but I don't see why we should be receiving more bruises



on Lamberton's account. I think, at least, that mine ought first to be thoroughly healed up, before I risk my poor body in any adventure for him that might deprive it of the little life that yet remains from my present maltreatment."

"Why, I hope, Reuben, that your manhood has not been cowed by the unfortunate failure of a single experiment. Cheer up, man! I feel almost ashamed for your sake. Shall we be afraid of this hair-brained boy, who, after all, is only one against three?"

"Don't call me a coward, Martin," answered Maxwell. "I won't endure that. I think I have always shown myself to be at least as brave as you are, my stout friend."

"To be sure you have," observed the other. "But, then, you know, our bravery always depends on circumstances. I am half persuaded that we will have an opportunity of showing it now, if we but stand up in defense of Captain Lamberton."

"Very good!" replied Maxwell. "Now, Martin, you threw out some confounded strong hints of my being a coward. Come on then and follow me. If we should be so fortunate as to overtake the enemy who has just escaped from us, you may, in the first place, have all the glory of whipping him yourself. But remember, that as soon as you shall have done with him you must fight me, for I know that by that time you will be pretty well used up, and we shall be on a perfect equality. You see, Martin, I don't like to be called a coward."

"Hold on and keep cool!" exclaimed his companion. "I am sure that I did not mean you wouldn't fight when occasion required it. Why, Reuben, I hope we are both as brave and as true as steel."

It happened, just at the moment Maxwell uttered these words, that Agnes and Maggy, who still continued to remain in their place of concealment, attempted to move off in a direction opposite from that which Blakely and Maxwell seemed bent on pursuing. Whether their intention was to escape from the near vicinity of these doughty individuals, or to render some assistance, if possible, to the person who was the object of their persecution, by notifying him of his danger, we leave the reader himself to judge. But whatever may have been the motives by which they were



influenced, their movements were immediately discovered by the two men between whom the conversation we have narrated had just taken place, and who became so much alarmed that they made all possible haste to escape from a place where they now thought they were surrounded by spies, and exposed perhaps to the utmost danger. They fled precipitately through the woods, to the great relief of the two defenseless females, Reuben Maxwell following his companion with admirable ease and alertness, considering the painful injuries he had complained of only a few moments before.

As to Percy Courtland, whose identity with the individual whom Blakely and Maxwell attempted to make prisoner in the old house the reader will before this time have discovered, a few words will suffice to explain his present adventure. Agreeably to what we have already hinted, he was fond of long rambles from the spot on which the tents of the miners were pitched, and in one of these rambles happened to discover the old ruined building, to which, when he had no other employment, he frequently retreated, and where he spent much time in reading such books as he had brought with him to California. Captain Lamberton discovered his retreat, and determined to place him a second time under arrest. For this purpose he put into requisition the services of the two myrmidons who had followed his fortunes since the commencement of our narrative, and whose adventure in the old building turned out as we have described it above. Maxwell, as we have seen, had laid hands on Percy, who, by an exertion of bodily strength he was scarcely conscious of possessing himself, was able to resist the attack on his liberty successfully, which terminated in the fall of the former individual from the balcony. As soon as this catastrophe took place, which was certainly not intended by Percy himself, that young gentleman ran down to the door at which Blakely had been posted, and finding that he had gone round to the other side of the house for the purpose of assisting his companion, he saw that there was less reason for detaining himself on the spot, and immediately made his escape in a different direction. In a few minutes he overtook Captain Lamberton, who had some reason to believe that his contemplated assault on the



young man had become public, and that attempts might be made to rescue him out of his hands. It was for the purpose of apprising his accomplices of such attempts, if any should be made, that he was posted as a sentinel at some distance in the adjoining wood. As Percy approached the place where his persecutor was watching, he made up his mind to pass him in silence, unless he should meet with some interruption from his antagonist. He accordingly proceeded on his course without noticing Lamberton, and kept as much out of his way as possible. But the latter resolved that he should not escape from him on terms so easy. He crossed over to the path which Percy was pursuing, and with inflamed visage, and an utterance half suppressed by anger, he commanded him to stop.

"I will not stop at your instance, Captain Lamberton," said Percy, "unless you assign some better reason for my doing so than your own word."

"Villain!" exclaimed Lamberton, "my word is sufficient."

"I am no villain, Captain Lamberton," answered Percy, "and I cast the word back into your own teeth. *You* are not only a villain, but I am afraid in heart are both a libeler and an assassin."

"Base scoundrel!" ejaculated the captain; "dare you use such language concerning me, and to my face?"

"Ay, Captain Lamberton!" replied Percy. "I do not fear you—I do not seek to flatter you. I make use of precisely that kind of language which I believe your baseness and treachery so richly merit."

"Then take that, impudent reviler!" cried the captain, striking him a very severe blow over the shoulders with a cane which he held in his hands, and which was so unexpected to Percy that he was not quick enough in trying to ward off the battery from his person. But in a moment afterward he closed with his antagonist in fierce and desperate struggle. In another moment the cane parted from the center and discovered the shining blade of a dirk or sword, which was now unsheathed from its scabbard, and which Lamberton seemed to aim with deadly purpose at Percy's bosom. This time, however, his opponent was too quick for him. He parried the thrust with his arm,



and, pitching against his antagonist with all his might, caught hold of the handle of the sword and wrenched it out of his hand. But, in the performance of this feat, the point of the sword glanced aside as it quit the grasp of Lamberton, and, being forced in an oblique direction, pierced him slightly between the ribs. At the same time Percy hurled the weapon from him with all his might, and Lamberton, supposing he could make his comrades hear him, cried out lustily for help. But already these craven-hearted miscreants had become alarmed at the appearance of Maggy and her companion, and were retreating through the woods with all the dispatch in their power. Captain Lamberton was glad to follow their example as soon as he found that his antagonist had only been fighting in self-defense, and that he was generous enough to let him depart without the slightest wish to do him an injury.

It may easily be supposed the two females were greatly excited by the stirring scenes they had just been called to witness. Agnes caught a distinct view of the form of Percy as he passed from the old building, and was ready to exclaim with surprise and emotion when the sudden apparition burst on her eyesight. But from anything that could be observed in the conduct and speech of Maggy, either at the time these occurrences took place or afterward, it may be doubted whether she was favored with the same evidences of recognition. Both the girls had witnessed the encounter between Percy and Lamberton, and were sufficiently near not only to see the struggle that passed between them, but to hear the words that were exchanged on both sides.



## CHAPTER XLVI.

WHEN Percy Courtland became disengaged from the unpleasant rencounter into which he had been brought with Captain Lamberton, he steered directly toward the neighborhood in which his tent was pitched in the mining district. His bosom, of course, had become greatly agitated from the scenes he had just passed through, and he felt a good deal uneasy on account of the unfortunate wound which he knew Lamberton had accidentally received during the struggle between them from his own weapon. He was well aware that that individual had of late grown completely desperate, and would in all probability make use of the occurrence that had just taken place as an additional means to bring him into disgrace and odium with the Committee. It was true that no persons were present at this unhappy meeting but themselves; and yet it was quite uncertain whether the ruffians who attempted to arrest him at the old house might not have witnessed it from the spot where he left them, and would thus have it in their power to distort all the circumstances in favor of Captain Lamberton. But whether this would turn out to be the case or not, he was afraid the Committee would listen to Lamberton's own story, and would perhaps regard him as the only witness in the transaction. No wonder, therefore, that he should feel great concern on account of what had just taken place.

While indulging in these unpleasant reflections, and before reaching the encampment where his tent was pitched, he was met by Braxton.

"My dear Percy," said the latter, "I have been in pursuit of you everywhere, and am exceedingly glad to find you here at last. You know that I have told you more than once that you yourself must become an important instrument in freeing Agnes Russell from the power and malignity of Captain Lamberton, and the time has at length arrived when your services in relation to this desir-



able object are most needed. But, my dear boy, you look concerned and unhappy. What is the matter with you? what accident has befallen you to-day?"

"Something," said Percy, "that I am afraid will interfere with the very task you are about to impose on me—something that may not only affect my own interest but likewise the interest of Agnes Russell."

"Speak it out then," rejoined Braxton. "Let me hear what new thing is likely to give us trouble in relation to this persecuted young lady."

Percy then proceeded to give Braxton a particular and detailed account of the events that had just taken place, in which he was compelled to bear such an active part, and with which our readers are already fully acquainted.

"This is all bad enough," said Braxton, "and yet I will not say that it is beyond remedy. It has providentially happened, I trust, in order that your own diligence may only be the more quickened in regard to the work which I am now about to assign you. You must proceed at once to Gilson's Rancho, on the road to Monterey, in order to deliver a message there to Governor Cartwright. The Committee, you know, is to meet for business on Monday next, and it is of the utmost consequence that Governor Cartwright should assemble with them on the first day of the meeting, or at least not later than the second day. Almost everything in relation to poor Agnes depends on his presence. But he is not aware of this himself, and I am told has expressed a determination not to be there until the latter part of the week. This will not do. You must therefore hasten with all diligence to deliver the note I shall give you into his own hands. Everything depends on having him here in time. You must set out this very night, and give yourself no more rest and refreshment than is absolutely requisite for your bodily health and strength, until you and he shall appear before the Committee in Sacramento City. Here is the note. Do not wait for any further explanation, but enter on your journey at once." Percy was supplied with the means of hiring a horse at the next rancho on the road, and proceeded forthwith to fulfill the task confided to him by Braxton.

That gentleman had not parted long from Percy before he was overtaken by Mr. Stanley, who was on his way to



Sacramento City, where he expected to meet the Grand Committee on the following week. These two friends, of course, soon entered into serious conversation with each other on the subject of the important business which was to come before that body, and in which they both could not but feel a strong and deep interest. Braxton, at the same time, related to his companion the unfavorable occurrence which had that day happened between Percy and Captain Lamberton, and made some remarks on the consequences he was afraid might result from the same.

"You certainly have reasonable grounds for your apprehension of danger," said Mr. Stanley, "and yet it would be altogether wrong to suffer our minds to become affected with too much alarm. We must not forget that some of the members of the Committee are losing confidence in Lamberton, and are becoming more and more impressed with the conviction that it is their duty to inquire with strictness into all the transactions connected with that gentleman. Rumor is doing a good deal to rouse their fears, and put them on their guard. Besides, his own conduct, so strange and eccentric of late, seems calculated to betray the weakness if not the wickedness of his character. He is exhibiting to the world another terrible example of the certain transformation which vice, when persisted in, sooner or later, is always sure to work in the human heart."

"He is unquestionably a very bad man," observed Braxton, "and of late has shown himself also to be a very weak one."

"He is, as I have said," answered Stanley, "another illustration of the gradual but sure inroads which unrestrained selfishness will always make in its tendency to warp aside and corrupt our better principles. The heart of man may be said never to be at rest. It can no more remain neutral, so far as respects the contest urged between vice and virtue, than a floating body can remain stationary in mid-air. It must either fall to the ground, or be borne away by a strong current of wind to the clouds. It must either ascend upward toward heaven, or sink in willing thralldom downward toward hell. And when once the affections begin to tend downward, what a rapid descent there is at last—what a vast, profound, and absolute fall!



I cannot believe that Captain Lamberton was once what he appears to be now. But there was a strong attraction in the wrong direction—a secret bias in the interior of his mind which he was unwilling to detect—and he suffered himself to be led away into evil. Oh, Mr. Braxton, let us pray to be delivered from temptation! We may believe ourselves to stand ever so strong and ever so safe, yet if we have only built our house on the sand, the first blast of the tempest will level it to the ground, and great will be the fall of it.”

“And yet,” said Braxton, “may we not, if we choose, rise in an opposite direction with equal certainty and with equal ease?”

“Undoubtedly we may,” answered Stanley, “if we are only willing to pursue the right course. It is not so difficult to get to heaven as some people imagine; and yet the task is one which, on most occasions, is hard and severe to perform. The reason is that we wish to go to heaven in our own way, as the monarch would have preferred some royal road to knowledge; but this is always sure to place us in a wrong position. We want to shape our course to bliss like men of cunning and business, calling to our assistance the insufficient help of forms and ceremonies, and surrounding ourselves by a thousand contrivances invented by pride and erudition, when we ought to learn with the simplicity of little children. A child’s spirit would be as light and buoyant as it is humble and docile, and would be certain to carry us aloft with the same rapidity that we are now so liable to be precipitated downward.”

Braxton’s countenance brightened when he heard these words pronounced by his friend Stanley. He felt, indeed, that he was too proud, but he was persuaded that it was not impossible for him to become humble. He cherished a sincere desire to rise above the frailties of his nature, and he now thought that he saw how this might be done without foregoing the suggestions of his reason, or entangling himself with sophistries which might exercise his understanding but could never improve his heart.

These two individuals continued to travel in company until they reached the level piece of ground in the neighborhood of the mines, where were erected the tents of the



workmen, whose time was principally occupied in attending to such amusements and pursuits as they believed would best help them to pass through the rainy season. The inconvenience arising from the fall of so much water had now in some measure ceased. For the last two or three days the rain had slackened, and gleams of sunshine sometimes looked out from between the dark clouds, and spread a cheerful light over the face of the surrounding country. On the occasion of which we now speak especially the weather was unusually fine, and the sun had been shining nearly all day. This brought many of the workmen out of their tents, and gave a pleasing variety to their hitherto monotonous employments. Some amused themselves by wrestling or playing ball, others by pitching quoits, and others again by engaging in foot-races, or by shooting with rifles at a mark. But there were not a few who were seated before rude tables in front of their tents, and were deeply engaged at play for stakes, which, perhaps, in some instances, involved all that they were worth.

“It is strange,” said Mr. Stanley to Braxton, “that men will often hazard so much for that which, after it is obtained, they seem to value so little. A great majority of the individuals whom we see playing yonder are men who, no doubt, were brought up in comfort, if not in profusion. But they were dissatisfied with the moderate extent of their possessions, and they resolved to come to this country in order that they might grow richer at least, if not happier. And although many of them have been disappointed, yet some of them have realized their expectations. But what do we observe to be the consequence? Do we find that they appreciate their hard-earned gains in proportion to the value they at one time seemed to set upon them, or to the hardships they have been compelled to encounter in their acquisition? Like fortunes acquired under other circumstances, these acquisitions seem to confer but little true happiness on their possessors. And, what is stranger still, and what we do not so often observe in other instances, not only do these men not enjoy the wealth they have been at so much pains in acquiring, but they really would seem to set no value upon it. They gain it by hard toil to-day, and carelessly lose it at the gambling-table to-morrow.”



"I am strongly inclined to believe," continued Mr. Stanley, "that there is a plain and important reason for this. It was never intended by the wisdom of Providence that men should grow suddenly and permanently rich, either by idle speculation, or by some artificial discovery in the process of experiment like that of the philosopher's stone. The great end of man's creation, we may readily perceive, is, that he might render himself constantly useful by diligent and active employment, and just in proportion as he thus fulfills the end of his being, make himself constantly happy. He that violates this universal law of nature can hardly expect to prosper. Hence we may see that men who grow suddenly rich, almost in all instances, are as suddenly deprived of their fortunes. They either esteem that of little value which has been acquired with so little labor, and therefore heedlessly suffer it to pass again from their possession, or they are deprived by some kind of fatality of property which they have gained by means that did not justify the acquisition. The fruit that ripens too fast will be certain to perish with the same rapidity—a sudden inundation can never be expected to outlast the equable flowing of a gentle and silent stream. But the great principle would appear to be, that what we acquire without care and industry, we either will not or cannot make subservient to the purposes of lasting happiness. We either lose it ourselves or it is lost by our children."

Braxton thought he saw good reasons for acquiescing in the arguments advanced by Mr. Stanley, and soon afterward the two friends parted, the latter continuing to pursue his way toward Sacramento City, and the former tarrying for a short period among the tents of the miners, with whom, in the course of his business transactions, he had contracted a pretty general acquaintance.

When Agnes and Maggy returned to the mission station, and found themselves safely restored to the little apartment they occupied, they were both laboring, as might be expected, under considerable excitement. The occurrences they had just witnessed made a deep impression on their minds. The heart of Agnes especially was agitated by a great variety of emotions which rendered her thoughtful and restless, and which she found it impossible to restrict within



the limits of her own bosom. At last she gave vent to her feelings in the following language :

"The events that have just transpired before our eyes, Maggy, are such as may well occasion us no small degree of alarm. I must confess that they have caused me much pain and uneasiness, and I have no doubt have produced the same effect on your own mind. And yet I have reason to believe that you remained ignorant of that which gave me the most alarm to-day, and about which I continue to entertain very great fear and anxiety. Did you know the person who escaped from the old house immediately after the catastrophe we witnessed in the rear of the building?"

"I certainly did not," replied Maggy, "although there seemed to be something in his movements to which I had not been an entire stranger."

"That person was Percy Courtland."

Maggy started. "You certainly do not mean what you say?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Maggy," Agnes answered, "that individual, you may rest assured, was none other than Percy Courtland, your friend and mine, the same individual whom you met in distress in the City of New York, and who I am afraid has been forced to encounter still greater troubles here than those which he was exposed to when you saw him at that time."

"But how, in the name of wonders," said Maggy, "did he find his way up into this country, and what was he doing among the ruins of that old house?"

"I could hardly answer that question," rejoined Agnes, "if I were to try, nor is it of much consequence that I should seek to gratify your curiosity if I could. Percy Courtland is in this neighborhood, Maggy, and I am unhappy."

"But why should you be unhappy?" asked Maggy. "Why not rather rejoice that you may now put yourself under the protection of one who will supply the place of your brother, and who will assist you in the discovery of him after whom you are so anxiously inquiring?"

"Alas!" cried Agnes, "you, poor girl, are but little acquainted with the difficulties which attend his path as well as my own! Maggy, I feel a pressure on my bosom that



is exhausting my strength and resolution. I have suffered much from disappointment, from privation, from hope deferred, from that destitution and loneliness in the world which is sufficient in itself to wear out and break the stoutest heart. I have borne the insults and indignities of a man whom I once only disliked, but now am brought against my will to fly from and hate. I have engaged with earnestness and affection in search after a brother whom I dearly love, and at the moment when I thought my fondest expectations were to be realized, all correspondence with that brother is cut off, and I am again compelled to wait, long and silent, in helplessness and hopelessness of heart, for new strength and new encouragement which perhaps I may never experience. And amid all this sickness and sorrow of spirit, methinks I could still find patience, if it were but the will of Heaven that I should suffer alone, and not involve others in my misfortunes. But when I reflect that I am the unwilling means of causing those who are innocent to bear a portion of my sorrows—when I think of you, Maggy—of my brother—of Percy Courtland—all made to share my own troubles—all doomed to suffer for my sake—my poor oppressed bosom feels its burden of grief with tenfold agony. I am almost ready to fly from myself, and to believe that my own heart is supremely selfish. I am fearful that I possess little of that heroism and self-denial which I once thought engrossed so much of my love and admiration, and would be freely dedicated, if necessary, to the service of my fellow-mortals. Why do I not yield myself up at once for their sakes? Why do I not make that sacrifice which would satisfy the angry spirit of him who now threatens to involve us all in one common ruin? Why do I not comply with the terms on which Captain Lamberton would at once consent to free us from the dangers by which we are now threatened?"

"You might as well inquire why you are a woman and not an angel," said Maggy. "It is mighty wrong that you should not only be abused and persecuted by that unmannerly captain, but that you should begin to reproach yourself with faults you are no more guilty of than the sun which shines above your head in the heavens. Nay, if you were even an angel, it would not be your duty to make the sacrifice you speak of."



"I wonder," asked Agnes, "when the Committee meets of which we have heard so much lately?"

"I am not able to say," observed her companion; "but I think it will be before many days shall pass over our heads."

"I have often flattered myself, Maggy, that we might then look for a termination of our sorrows. And yet who will say what that hateful man may be able to accomplish! I am told that he exercises an influence among the people here that is almost irresistible. My poor brother—poor unhappy Percy—what will become of them?"

"You forget, my dear mistress," answered Maggy, "that we are not left alone. God has already raised us up friends who have shown us much kindness, and who have taken a deep interest in our welfare. He is able to bring us help from other sources, which may be the means not only of saving ourselves, but of defending and protecting those for whom you feel so much concern."

"I thank you, Maggy, for rebuking my weakness, and reminding me of my duty. I ought indeed to feel more confidence in that unseen arm which is constantly outstretched for our safety. My complaints and fears, I trust, have proceeded from but a momentary depression of spirits, which will cease as soon as the fit shall have passed away."

Agnes certainly attributed the weakness she had manifested in the presence of Maggy to its proper cause. But, as she herself had said, the fit was but momentary, and she immediately afterward recovered full possession of her wonted strength and resolution. "I must take care," said she to Maggy, "how I yield up my courage hereafter, for I may yet have something to do as well as to suffer."

At that moment the old padre entered the apartment. He met the girls with a benignant smile, and with a countenance radiant with joy and gladness. "I have good news to tell you," said he, addressing himself to Agnes. "But alas, my child! what is the matter? You have been weeping."

"It is all over now, good father," replied Agnes. "It was but a sudden fit of passion, which had passed away before you entered the apartment."

"And yet," said the old man, "there must have been



some cause for your sorrow. Tell me what has happened to disturb your peace."

"It was my intention to tell you all, without any request on your part," answered Agnes, "and I am only sorry that I should have betrayed my weakness so far as to have excited your concern on my account." She then proceeded to give him a brief narrative of the adventures that had befallen Maggy and herself, a few hours before, at the old house.

"Be not alarmed, my daughter," remarked the venerable father, "on account of what your eyes have witnessed to-day. I would have much rather, indeed, that it had not happened, but let us remember that, under the dispensations of a merciful Providence, good is always deduced out of evil. Whatever may be the designs of Captain Lamberton, we have every reason to believe that he will not ultimately prosper. In the mean time be particular in charging your memory with the conversation that passed between Blakely and Maxwell. It may be necessary that that conversation after awhile should be known to others as well as to yourself."

"But, father," observed Agnes, "you remarked a few minutes ago that you had some good news to tell us. Let us hear what it is, for, after the anxiety we have passed through to-day, we really stand in need of something to gladden our hearts."

"The news I have to communicate," said the old man, "is not of a nature to impart immediate joy and consolation to your bosoms, but only as it affords you a promise of happiness hereafter. I am directed to inform you that the Grand Committee meets in Sacramento City next week, and to request that you will consent to be present on that occasion. My own heart rejoices at the near approach of a meeting which I hope will, in its deliberations, not only benefit the community at large, but will be the immediate cause of your deliverance from the dangers and difficulties which now surround your path. You are to be placed under my care, and await the pleasure of the Committee after you reach the city."

"Alas, my good father! Could you but give me the assurance that all will end well! Oh, that I could be fully persuaded that none will suffer on my account!"



"Let us hope for the best, my child!" was the answer of the venerable man. "Nothing is certain in this life except that God, who is incomprehensible, rules all things by his divine love and wisdom."

"And therefore," said Agnes, "I ought to fear nothing."

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

THE friends of Agnes, at Courtland Hall and in its neighborhood, were, in the mean time, becoming more and more uneasy on account of the long silence which continued to involve the fate of those who were so dear to them in impenetrable doubt and uncertainty. "What," was the constant exclamation of Thomas Russell, "has become of my daughter? When am I again to hear from my son? After the hopes that were so lately kindled in my bosom,—after I was assured that I had found one of my children, and that both would soon be restored to my loving embraces,—must it be my unhappy destiny to die childless at last?" At the same time Mr. and Mrs. Courtland were constantly employed in making similar lamentations about their absent child. "Poor Percy!" they would say, "whither has he wandered! What cruel hardships may he have been called to encounter in this cold and unfeeling world! Surely, he has suffered long and suffered much, or some intelligence of him would have reached us before this time. Perhaps he is dead, or perhaps he has suffered more than death in the extremity of his grief and misfortunes. Poor Percy! would to God we could speak with certainty of the fate of our noble boy!"

It was while these unhappy parents were thus "mourning for their children, and refused to be comforted," that they convened one morning in the small library-room belonging to Mr. Courtland, to which we have before alluded on more than one occasion. Mrs. Truehope and her daughter Clara formed a part of the same little circle. The morning was beautiful, and the wide and rich prospect which spread out in almost endless variety from one of the



library windows, seemed to hold the latter in fixed and absorbing attention. At last she exclaimed to herself,—

“This is beautiful! but somehow or other it is tenderly sad at the same time. I gaze around me, and drink in with delight the rich profusion that colors and adorns the extended landscape. The trees and woods—the hills and plains—the fountains and streams—are possessed of charms that the dullest fancy could scarcely behold without emotion, and the mighty expanse looks like a magnificent temple rising spontaneously from the earth, and proclaiming the goodness and wisdom of its Divine Maker. But my longing eyes stretch beyond all this in the far distance, and I feel as if I would fain gaze on objects there that are necessarily beyond the scope of my feeble vision. And yet I cannot but indulge in thoughts about the things that exist,—about the forms that live and move,—under yon far distant sky. There, too, all must be bright and beautiful, as we behold the glowing landscape to be here. There, too, there are living beings like ourselves, exulting in joy or mourning in sorrow, laughing or weeping, as the sunshine or shade falls on their checkered pathway. There, too, perhaps, lives my lost one,—the child of my early joys and sorrows,—the light that my imagination would still follow through this dark vale of tears!”

Clara turned away from the window with a sorrowful countenance. The form that her fancy had called into real life she thought she could see beckoning her from beyond the limits of the landscape, but in another moment she was of course persuaded that it was altogether an illusion. She looked on those around her, and felt that she was in a different part of the world. She knew that it was but a vision of her fancy that had passed before her, and that the pleasing dream must change again to the sternness and truth of real life. She clung, indeed, with credulous affection to the fond illusion, but before she could collect its scattered images it was dissipated and gone.

“My dear Clara,” said her mother, “what are you thinking about? You almost look as if you had been conversing with beings of some other world.”

“Why, mother,” observed Clara, “your conjectures are not as far from the truth as might at first be supposed. I was, indeed, conversing with one who is absent—with



one who in reality, perhaps, is the inhabitant of another world."

"But such thoughts, my daughter, are not proper—they are not wise—and if persisted in they may be expected to work a serious injury to your health and spirits."

"Alas!" exclaimed Mr. Russell, "why, after all, should you deprive Clara of almost the only worldly consolation which the case she so bitterly mourns is now able to afford her? She has lost her child,—why may not her spirit be permitted to commune with that child, whether he be in this world or the next—whether he be on earth or in heaven?"

"It is always dangerous," said Mrs. Truehope, "to give the reins too freely to our imagination. It is more wise, I believe, and more manly too, to meet the realities of life, especially if these be dark and gloomy, with a proper spirit, than to indulge in fancied dreams of happiness in which there is no reality and no truth."

"And yet," remarked Mr. Russell, "our dearest hopes are not unfrequently but the fabrications of our dreaming fancies. Alas! do you forbid me to indulge in visions that are so comfortable and soothing to the jaded and wearied spirits? Will you deprive me of these angel visitants that are sent from the spirit-world to minister to and strengthen me? I too have lost not one child only, but two. Will you say that I must yield to the reality of my sorrows with stoical indifference—that I must suffer the shock without a single sigh or groan—that I must hope for no reparation and no relief? May I not reclaim the forms of my children from foreign countries, from the inhospitable wilderness, from the bed of sickness, from the grave itself, if in my eager fancy I have the power to do so? May I not bid them pass before me as they did in brighter hours, and hold them again to my longing bosom? May not my spirit commune with theirs, and indulge in the promise of happier days—in the transports of a more perfect reunion? Deprive me of these blessed visions and you deprive me of all that now sustains and comforts me in the world. I am wretched in the loss of my children, and am only happy again when I believe they live, and that I am folding them to my arms."

While Mr. Russell was uttering this pathetic appeal to



those around him, Mrs. Courtland seemed to be laboring under a spasmodic motion of all the muscles of her body, which at last exhausted itself in a flood of tears. "I think," said she, "that our friend is right. This world would be dark and cheerless indeed—our hearts would grow beyond endurance sad and solitary, if the images we consecrate and embalm there were connected with none but melancholy thoughts. But it is a relief to our bosoms when we are permitted to associate with the objects of our love—to wander with them in fields of light—to converse with them in the secret chambers which God has so mysteriously formed within our souls. Often and often do I think of our dear Percy as he looked when his living form moved over yonder fields—when his presence gladdened the domestic hearth—when he was merry and happy in this very room. Is it wrong for me to recall his image, now that he has become a wanderer over the earth? Is it wrong for me to lay hold on his spirit, now that his bodily presence is impossible? Why should I not see him as I once saw him, in all the pride and beauty of youthful hope and youthful ambition? His material form, indeed, is absent, but his soul must be as truly inspired with life now as it ever was or ever will be in the present world."

"The questions which are so earnestly urged on this occasion," answered Mr. Courtland, "as in all discussions of a similar nature, only go to show that there are faults on both sides. We ought, as Mrs. Truehope says, to avoid dwelling too long, if possible, on the memories of those who are near and dear to us, lest, by having our minds fixed too intently on some particular train of thought, we should find it impossible afterward to divest ourselves of visions which might lead at last to frenzy and madness. On the other hand, we may certainly be allowed to recall the forms and features, and especially the virtues, of those whom we once loved, provided we are not made thereby to strengthen our gloomy thoughts and to deepen our sorrows. It is better sometimes to enter into the house of mourning than into the house of mirth; and yet, by continuing too long exposed to either influence, we may contract a disposition which will be decidedly injurious to our best interests."

"I suppose we would be as wisely employed," remarked



Mr. Russell, "by endeavoring to trace the causes which have led to the separation, and removing, as far as possible, the obstacles which stand in the way of a reunion."

"Certainly this would be our proper course," answered Mr. Courtland, "where such a reunion was desired, and was at all practicable. But in many cases, owing to a variety of circumstances, such a return to familiar intercourse would not be wished, and in others, however much it might be asked for, it could not be at all accomplished. In our own cases, for instance, of which we continue to make so much complaint, I am at a loss to know what could be done to restore us to the embraces of our children."

"Although nothing can be done," replied Mr. Russell, "yet certainly something may be hoped for."

"Yes!" exclaimed Mr. Courtland, "that is all which is now left to us, but that is much. Hope—trust—an abiding confidence in the goodness of the divine will—what more could we desire to sustain us under the afflictions of life?"

"And should our hopes be realized," said Mrs. Truehope, "then would come the happy period of fruition."

"Ay!" cried Mr. Russell, "I have sometimes thought of that. "What a glorious feast—what music and dancing should we have—could we see our children again restored to the embraces of those by whom they are so well loved, and whom they love so well in return."

"Such a joyful period as that," observed Mrs. Courtland, with a hysterical laugh, "I am afraid would be more than my poor nerves could bear. The very mention of it causes my heart to beat with a pulsation so audible that it alarms me even now."

"We would all no doubt labor under great emotion," remarked Clara, "and yet how sweetly would those emotions die away into the calm serenity of loving and peaceful hearts. How soon would we forget our intensest thoughts, and all our feelings be hushed into a state of quiet and permanent peace!"

"Well, now," said Mr. Courtland, "you are all doing bravely at last. I must confess that my own spirits were a little while ago suffering from the discouragements which I saw in yourselves, but now I am comforted with the assurance that you are not only learning how to bear your sorrows patiently, but that we may all look forward to the



future with hope. Why, look you, friend Russell," he exclaimed, directing his observations more particularly to that individual, "you know that I am sometimes a little vain of my skill in agriculture, and that my favorite hobby is this farm, on which I have bestowed the labor of nearly a lifetime, and which I am fond of exhibiting to all who are willing to indulge me in my favorite boast. Now, I cannot help saying that I feel as if I should yet live to have one of my strongest wishes gratified, and that is, to bring the land I am cultivating to still greater perfection, so that when Agnes and Alfred shall be again restored to your arms, and my own dear Percy too shall have returned from his wanderings, I may be able to show them all how much may be accomplished by calm, steady, patient perseverance at home."

"Indeed, neighbor Courtland," replied Mr. Russell, "I hope you will believe me when I say, that my most ardent wish and prayer is that your vanity in this particular, which I am disposed to think is almost or altogether excusable, may be fully gratified, as well on your own account as for the sake of all who are interested in a result so desirable. But, listen! I do believe that Harry and Rowland, who are engaged in putting the piece of ground in order that lies nearest to the orchard, are busily discussing precisely the same subject which has occupied so much of our own attention for the last hour."

The little group assembled in the library now became silent, and were somewhat surprised to hear the two persons alluded to conversing together in the following language:

"I tell you, Harry," said Rowland, "we must give this part of the farm such a dressing as it never had before. We must positively make it the garden-spot of this whole country."

"And why, my good friend Rowland," returned Harry, "are we so particularly to respect this spot above all others?"

"Just because," answered Rowland, "it is the spot which above all others was loved most by Percy, and which he always took the greatest pains to cultivate with his own hands. We must have it in as good order when he returns as it was when he left it."



"But how do you know that Percy will return at all?" observed Harry. "We have not heard from him for many long months, and I am afraid, Rowland, we shall never hear from him again."

"Not hear from him again?" exclaimed Rowland. "Blow me, Harry, if you are not as bad as your mother, who, bless her kind, soft heart, always looks on the dark side of things. I tell you, Harry, that I am as sure of seeing Percy again as I am that I see you now working in this field. And there is Agnes, too. Why, they are as certain to come together as if they were already standing to be married in the presence of the minister."

"Nonsense, Rowland!" said Harry. "It seems to me you are only dreaming."

"Dreaming, did you say? Why, that is the very thing, Harry. My dreams are just the true pictures that place the whole matter before me in clear light. I dreamt three times handrunning during last Christmas week that Percy and Agnes had returned home, and were married, and that they were living happily together in yonder old mansion, which still went by the name of Courtland Hall. And then I thought your father was dead, and I had grown old, and could no longer labor as I do now, and that they built a snug little cottage for me to live in at the side of the running stream just where it enters the meadow. Blow me, Harry, do you suppose I dreamt all that for nothing?"

"Why, I suppose the dreams were pleasant enough as long as they lasted," said Harry, "but I am inclined to believe that is the only benefit you can expect to derive from them. It would hardly turn out, I imagine, that they would think of building a snug little cottage for an old bachelor."

"And supposing I am a bachelor, Harry, is that any reason why I should not be made comfortable in my old days? Blow me, Harry, if I think you have half as much feeling for me as you ought to have."

"Hush, Rowland," cried Harry, "or I shall begin to imagine that as you grow older you are becoming more peevish. I am sure if your dreams could restore Percy and Agnes to their homes, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see you not only furnished with a cot-



tage, but with a palace too, if that would do you more good."

"Now that is speaking something to the purpose," answered Rowland. "I thought you loved me, Harry, and I now feel—indeed I have always felt—that you wish to see me happy. But, blow me, Harry, I am sure that I would be just as happy—nay, that I would be greatly more happy—in a cottage than I would be in a palace."

"It is very likely," returned Harry, "and therefore we shall have no difficulty in trying to oblige you! And in order, Rowland, that you may be convinced not only of my love, but of the respect I entertain for your own judgment, I am here ready to join with you in bringing this spot of ground to as much perfection as possible."

"Thank you! thank you!" returned Rowland. "And you may expect to receive the thanks of Percy, too, the moment he returns home, and finds that you have so kindly remembered him."

The little band of mourners, who had been trying so imperfectly to console each other in the small apartment of the library, were no less comforted than amused by hearing this simple discourse that passed between Harry and the old laborer, who counted so much on the certain fulfillment of his dreams. Indeed, scarcely anything could have happened at that time more calculated to impart joy and encouragement to their bosoms. They could, it is true, scarcely have owned that they had the least faith in Rowland's predictions, and yet such is the weakness of the human heart that, in seeking for consolation, it is often induced to lay hold of probabilities, no matter how trifling and childish, on which to hang its highest hopes of future happiness. If we are not absolutely superstitious, we may at least be flattered or alarmed by an interpretation given to some ordinary event, which is solely dictated by our secret hopes or fears, by feelings which we are neither willing to own nor wholly able to suppress. It was so in this instance. The company in the apartment of the library separated, quite as much cheered by the confident predictions of Rowland, as they had at first been discouraged by the sadness and gloom of their own imaginations.



## CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE important day at length arrived when the Grand Committee were to hold their deliberations in Sacramento City. The clouds that had long moistened the earth and the air with a deluge of water had passed away, the weather had become exceedingly fine, and the roads in every direction, to and from the city, were again in a condition to be used by the traveler. Although the population of California at that time was but small, and scattered over a considerable extent of country, yet as a great part of it was now concentrating at a point of but little magnitude, and which could afford but few accommodations, there was an appearance at least of great activity, if not of overwhelming numbers. It was soon ascertained that most of the parties we have had occasion to name in our narrative were lodged in the city. Captain Lamberton had arrived a day or two before, sullen, fierce, and ungovernable in his temper, and betraying that recklessness and eccentricity in his manners which had become a matter of observation to all his familiar acquaintances, but at the same time with an apparently bustling relish for and devotion to business. Braxton was there at his instance, as well as on account of others, showing some anxiety in his countenance, but not without a corresponding degree of courage and resolution. Molton Fairview and his friend, Darsie Hopkins, felt a deep interest in the inquiries that were about to be instituted concerning the loss which it was said the Committee had sustained in consequence of their confiding the transportation of their treasure to the care of Percy Courtland, and they appeared on the spot on his account as well as on account of Agnes Russell, whose fate they understood was intimately connected with his own. Blakely and Maxwell were prompt in attending as the witnesses of Captain Lamberton, who principally relied on their testimony for the accomplishment of his schemes of iniquity. Mr. Stanley and his daughter were by no



means unconcerned observers of what was going on, and were waiting with intense interest for the result of an investigation in which, they had reason to believe, the peace and happiness of their friend Agnes Russell were so deeply implicated. Other parties were expected to make their appearance in due time, so that every necessary step seemed to have been taken for an immediate examination of the case that was about to come before the Committee.

Before that body had assembled for the purpose of formally attending to the duties of their office, Braxton was induced to seek for a private interview with Agnes Russell. That lady, with her companion Maggy, as we have seen, had been placed under the guardianship of the old padre, and was now again sharing the company of her former friend, Letitia Stanley, who was lodged with her in the same apartment of the hotel. But the interview which Braxton desired was easily effected. Letitia and Maggy withdrew into the room occupied by the old padre, and Braxton was thus left to converse with Agnes in a manner that was perfectly agreeable to his own wishes.

He commenced by saying, "I trust, Miss Russell, that you are ready to repose the fullest confidence in one who has ever felt a deep and abiding interest in your welfare. The time has come when circumstances require that I should act toward you with unreserved openness and candor, and reveal to you everything. Hitherto it has been out of my power to do more than watch the progress of a series of events in which indeed I knew you to be deeply concerned, and in regard to which I have matured my own plans, but which I had no means of influencing or controlling without exposing your person, your character, and your future welfare to imminent danger. But these events, in which two other individuals are as deeply concerned as yourself, are now drawing to a crisis, a crisis that may possibly prove fatal to the persons to whom I have just alluded, and which you alone may be able to avert."

It will be readily conceived that the mind of Agnes became greatly agitated and alarmed on hearing this declaration. "For God's sake, Mr. Braxton," she exclaimed, "let me understand you! proceed at once to a disclosure of your meaning!"



"Then, thus I am compelled to speak," said Braxton. "Captain Lamberton has charged your brother and Percy Courtland, before the Committee now assembled in this place, with an offense which, if they should be found guilty, will expose them to disgrace and imprisonment at least, and, what would be ten times worse, perhaps to the vengeance of the infuriated populace. That this charge is as false as it is infamous I am well aware, and you as well as myself may readily know the motives which urge him to the perpetration of such unprincipled villainy. His great object is either to force you into a marriage contract, or ruin your peace of mind forever by destroying the characters of those whom he knows you love and esteem so highly. How far he may be able to succeed in accomplishing this latter object it is utterly out of my power to tell. I have done all I could to prevent it. But I am compelled to say, that the government of this country is weak and inefficient; that the laws, such as they are, afford but an uncertain protection to the innocent; and that Captain Lamberton is well known to exercise an influence over a majority of this Committee which we may fear will operate so as to defeat the ends of justice. Should he be able to bring about this unhappy result, one of two sacrifices must take place. Either your brother and your friend will be compelled to suffer the utmost extremity of his vengeance, or Agnes Russell must save them the dreadful penalty by becoming the bride of Captain Lamberton."

"Alas, Mr. Braxton!" cried Agnes, "the declaration you now so seriously and frankly make would be sad and overwhelming indeed but for the gradual preparation my mind has been undergoing to meet it. I have for a long while not only suspected Captain Lamberton's baseness, but have really had an indistinct knowledge of the cruel measures to which it would in all probability lead him. But oh, my brother! my poor Alfred! I did not know that he was to be sacrificed. No, I was not aware of that. I listened, indeed, to the cruel threats uttered by that proud, bad man, but I did not suffer myself to credit what he said. I could not believe that he possessed a heart sufficiently bold and atrocious to seek to carry his threats into execution. But he is cunning—he is wealthy—he is pow-



erful. He may be able to accomplish much—much that my poor heart is too simple to understand—much that I may be too feeble to counteract or remedy!”

“Let us hope for the best, Miss Russell. Only say you will do what you can for your brother—that you will seek to save poor Percy—that you will summon all your strength to meet the exigency that may arise to try your fortitude and your love.”

“And have I not said so? Oh, Mr. Braxton! am I not prepared for the sacrifice, costly, terrible, agonizing as it may be! Put me to the test! Go summon Captain Lambertton to my presence—let him propose his terms of compromise—let him exact the full price at which he values his peace and friendship. See with what smiles I will be able to meet him. Why, I will humbly fall down at his feet, and promise to submit to all his exactions, if he but speaks one gentle word in favor of my dear brother—if he but exercises his slightest influence in behalf of——”

Here Agnes paused, and suffered the strong feelings of her bosom to find vent in a flood of tears. Braxton saw that she was too much troubled to endure the anguish of any further conversation. Using, therefore, every means in his power to calm the extreme grief under which he discovered she was laboring, and assuring her that he was entirely satisfied with the readiness she expressed to do all that might be required of her in case of necessity, he took leave of her under an emotion of the strongest kind, and left the apartment.

In a few minutes afterward the room was entered by Letitia Stanley and Maggy. Agnes had become more calm, but was still suffering from the extreme agitation to which she had been exposed while conversing with Braxton.

“Ah, Miss Letitia!” she said, “I must really apologize to you for my disordered and melancholy appearance. I hope you will excuse me. I once thought I possessed a sufficient share of courage and fortitude to meet all my troubles with calmness, but we only know how weak we are when sorrow stares us right in the face. But help me, Letitia, to overcome these infirmities. Say that I have not lost all my courage, and that my present weakness is but owing to a temporary fit of low spirits. Do not let me believe that my tears are childish and effeminate. I feel as



if I ought to be strong and courageous, for every day I stand in need of increased strength and courage to meet my increased difficulties. Teach me, my dear Letitia, how to meet them like a martyr and a Christian."

"Alas!" cried Letitia, "how shall a young and simple girl like me attempt to instruct one who is so well calculated to be my own guide and teacher? I cannot forget my indebtedness to you for lessons which you have inculcated for my benefit on so many occasions, and which were as kindly dictated by your tongue as they were more vigorously enforced by your example. It would ill become me to do more than attempt to instruct you by your own wisdom. Follow the prescriptions which you laid down to me when we were both laboring under the disagreeable effects of sea-sickness. You are now sick at heart. Struggle against it with all your might, as you advised me to struggle when I was about to yield to the terrible malady which deprived me of hope and courage at sea. Fight it out bravely, as you then told me to do, and you will be sure to come off victorious."

"But are you not convinced that I am a coward, Letitia? I once thought, indeed, that I was possessed of an ordinary share of resolution. But oh! I feel now as if I had nothing to boast on that score."

"And it is that unreasonable doubt that constitutes your greatest weakness. Fight against it, Miss Russell, and you will be sure to overcome it, just as every other evil suggestion may be conquered by resolving not to regard it."

"Then you admit that I have the ability to fight, and am no coward? Thank you, my friend, for an admission so encouraging. I had almost despaired of my own strength, but I will now hope that I may not falter, even should the sacrifice required be greater than any I have yet been called to make."

It was evident that during the whole of the interview thus held with Braxton and with Miss Stanley, the soul of Agnes Russell was so exercised with conflicting emotions, that it was pierced, as it were, to the very center. But she now rose, looked calmly on Letitia and on Maggy, and walked confidently forward, like one who has received strength from a new resolution. She again became the animating spirit that gave firmness and courage to her



friends. "We may have much yet to suffer," said she to Maggy, "but let us be of good cheer. They that sow in tears may hope to reap in joy."

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

ON the first day of the meeting of the Grand Committee at Sacramento City little more was done than to attend to the preliminary measures of bringing it into a thorough organization. But the next day the meeting was declared to be ready for the transaction of business. Its deliberations were to take place in a room fitted up for a temporary purpose, but which was sufficiently capacious to accommodate all the members who were present on the occasion. On each side of the President's chair seats were arranged in the form of a narrow gallery, which were purposely extended to accommodate the ladies, and such other visitors as were supposed to be entitled to a little more than ordinary respect.

No one appeared to be more absorbed in the affairs of the Committee than did Captain Lamberton. He conversed freely with the members whose seats were in close proximity with his own, and sometimes made it his object to pass round from seat to seat, with the evident design of causing his influence to be felt in every part of the house. At last the order of business was named for that day, which was announced to be the investigation of charges brought against Percy Courtland.

Some objection was made to this on the part of two or three members who were not under the immediate influence of Captain Lamberton. It was urged that the defendant, who was absent, was expected every moment to appear in proper person, and that it would be violating every principle of order and justice to attempt to proceed with the investigation without giving him an opportunity of making a defense. To this Captain Lamberton replied that the defendant had been permitted to roam at large contrary to what had been the usual order of the Committee on simi-



lar occasions, that it was not certainly known whether he would ever again make his appearance before them, and that if it was his intention to do so, he ought to have postponed every other engagement for the purpose of affording him an opportunity to appear before them that morning.

It was then urged in the second place that Governor Cartwright, who was an important witness for the defendant, was likewise absent, and that gross injustice would be done to the defendant without giving him a chance of producing that gentleman before the Committee.

To this it was again answered by Captain Lamberton, that Governor Cartwright was not expected in town until the latter part of the week, and that if Mr. Courtland had neglected to secure his testimony in time, that was no reason that the deliberations of the Committee should be delayed. He was bound to abide by the consequences of his own neglect.

The opposition of Lamberton and his partisans prevailed against a feeble minority, and it was decided by an overwhelming vote of the members present to proceed in the investigation.

The first witness produced against Percy Courtland was Martin Blakely. He testified to the fact of having been at the house of Saunders on the night that Percy lodged there on his way to San Francisco. He stated that he saw him when he arrived with the box that contained the gold he had charge of,—that another person had arrived just before him with a box of a similar make and appearance, and had encamped at the edge of the wood, at a short distance from the house,—that on Percy's first arrival he committed the box to the care of the landlord, but afterward took it up with him to his sleeping apartment,—that he saw the stranger who had encamped at the edge of the wood depart in the morning with the box Percy had in his possession the evening before, and that Percy took with him the box which Blakely had seen in the custody of the stranger when he first arrived at the public inn. He went on to give the additional circumstance of having been present when the box was delivered by its carrier to Captain Lamberton, that he knew it to be the same which was exchanged for the other that had been brought to the public house by the stranger, and that the amount of gold which



it contained did not at all correspond with the written certificate brought by the bearer.

Very few questions were put to Blakely on his cross-examination. He was asked by one or two of the members of the Committee, whether he was sure that the box which Percy took away with him in the morning from the tavern was the same that the stranger brought with him the night before. But no one inquired whether he knew how the exchange had been effected, and how one of the boxes came to be substituted for the other.

The testimony of Maxwell, in its general import, did not differ much from that of his confederate, Blakely. He informed the Committee, however, that all boxes made in California for the purpose of transporting gold were shaped precisely alike, but that those belonging to the Committee, and which were used for the purpose of carrying their treasures to the bank in San Francisco, had on them a private mark which made it easy to identify them from all others.

The next witness called on was Braxton. He was placed before the Committee by Captain Lamberton with a satisfied air, as if he felt that whatever might be said or imagined against the characters of the other two witnesses who had just been examined, this one at least would give his testimony entirely free from all suspicion, and would add undoubted confirmation to the truth of that which had already been received. On the other hand, several of the friends of poor Percy Courtland who were present, were equally certain that the testimony of Braxton would operate in his favor, and they waited in breathless anxiety to hear what he had to say. It was evident that that individual, when called to the stand as a witness, was laboring under emotions which had a visible effect on his person. His cheeks were slightly flushed, and his countenance wore an uneasy and restless look. He was called by Lamberton to bear testimony to the amount of gold contained in the case which had been delivered by Percy at the bank in San Francisco. This testimony agreed with what the other witnesses had stated, but was delivered by Braxton in a manner that seemed strongly to imply that he had something more to say. He was watched by many of the members of the Committee with anxious expectation, but those outside who knew him to be the friend of Percy



Courtland, regarded his words and looks with a still more intense interest. They thought every moment that he was about to say something in addition. They leaned over to catch the words they were sure he was going to utter—they looked at each other and then at him—and were ready to call on him for an open avowal of all he knew. Braxton pondered, hesitated, directed his eyes first toward the President of the Committee, and then toward Lamberton. At last he retired from the stand like one who was not entirely satisfied with his own conduct, and who was puzzled about something he was unable to see clearly in his own mind.

When Braxton got fairly disengaged from the duty he was called on to perform for the Committee as a witness, and was observed to be again seated in the narrow gallery which had been constructed for the accommodation of spectators, it was noticed that Captain Lamberton sighed forth a deep expiration from his lungs, and now seemed able to breathe more freely than he had done a few minutes before. His next movement was to claim the attention of the Committee to his own declarations as a witness. But it is unnecessary that we should detain the reader with a statement of what his evidence was on that occasion. It amounted in substance to precisely the same representation that was made by Braxton. The truth is, that Captain Lamberton, with all his distortion of mind and feeling—with all his desperate love of worldly riches and worldly gratification—felt a strong repugnance to enter on an open and deliberate violation of those principles of religion and morality which it had been the attempt of his instructors to instill into his mind from his earliest years. Perhaps it was a regard for the good opinion of this world—perhaps it was a fear for the punishment of the next—but whatever were the considerations by which he was influenced, he shrunk from the idea of calmly and coolly violating the truth in his own person. Like thousands of other individuals who are desirous of observing a decent exterior before men, he was capable of resorting to the grossest sophistry—he could reason himself into all kinds of follies and absurdities—he could make the worse appear the better reason—yet he ever abstained from an open and willful violation of those obvious rules of conduct which



bind the human race together into one family. He would not bear false witness—that he knew might expose him to the penalties of both earth and Heaven—but he was willing to harass and persecute poor Agnes Russell—he was willing, for the sake of accomplishing his iniquitous purposes, to wrong and imprison poor Percy Courtland—he was willing to contract the inward disposition and character of a fiend, while he persuaded himself at the same time that his conduct was excusable, as not only belonging to a man of the world, but to what he would call a gentleman and a Christian.

While Lamberton was engaged in giving his testimony before the Committee, Braxton was observed to slip down from his seat, and retire with Mr. Stanley to a deep recess at the farther end of the hall, where the two entered into a very close and earnest conversation. In a short time they called to their assistance Molton Fairview and Darsie Hopkins. After a few more minutes' deliberation the parties separated, as if they had agreed on some conclusion by which they resolved to be guided in future.

With the declarations made by Captain Lamberton the testimony closed on the part of the Committee. The friends of the accused were then called on to enter on a defense of their client if they had any to make. To this invitation it was immediately answered by Darsie Hopkins, who now made a public avowal of espousing the cause of his friend, that they had no testimony to offer in his behalf. He remarked that they had been waiting in anxious expectation every moment to see Mr. Courtland appear in that hall, and assume the management of his cause in person—that they believed him to be entirely innocent of the offense laid to his charge—that a most unscrupulous malignity was at the bottom of the prosecution which was so indecently urged against him—that it would be in vain to attempt to offer testimony in his favor unless he himself could be present, and would have an opportunity of confronting the charges that had been laid before the Committee—and that if this was refused him, there was no alternative left but that his case should be submitted at once to a vote of the tribunal, before whom it was pretended it had been fairly heard and tried.

In reply to this statement made by Hopkins, the President of the Committee had very little to say—indeed, he



seemed to accede to the truth of what had fallen from the mouth of the speaker. But he went on to remark, that the time of the Committee ought not to be wasted by listening to arguments that were unsound, because they were brought forward for the sole purpose of justifying the culpable negligence of the defendant. "If he choose to suffer judgment to go by default, that was a matter of his own seeking, and with which the Committee had as little to do as the man in the moon."

With this unfeeling remark on the part of the President, the case of Percy Courtland was immediately submitted to a vote of the Committee, who almost unanimously pronounced him to be guilty of the charges specified in the information which had been lodged against him.

The course adopted and pursued by Percy's friends was the one which had been agreed on between them, after holding the short consultation in the recess of the hall to which we have alluded above. They clearly saw that as the Committee was at present organized and influenced, no testimony within the power of Percy's friends to offer was likely to have the slightest effect on the minds of its members. It was thought best, therefore, to forego every attempt at making a defense before them, it being considered that it would be much more prudent to offer their testimony altogether, should anything providentially transpire thereafter to secure to Percy a fair and impartial trial.

But this latter contingency was hardly to be expected. A loud clamor was made at once, especially by Captain Lamberton, for the final sentence and condemnation of the absent defaulter, whose conviction it was said had been legally pronounced by competent authority. Although it was known that in ordinary cases no criminal could be sentenced before his body was held under arrest and produced in court, yet in this case it was insisted that the forms of law might be so far departed from as to pronounce the final sentence in the absence of the defendant.

That doom the President was about to pronounce. He remarked "that he could see no reason for delaying the sentence a single moment. The sooner the defendant should be disposed of the better. They had little time enough to attend to the public interests, and this matter ought not



to interfere with the other business of the Committee." Having made these remarks, he was about to read the sentence, when he was interrupted by Mr. Stanley.

He begged that the sentence might be postponed until the last day of the week. He said that "he had reason to believe Mr. Courtland would make his appearance before that time; and although it might avail him but little to do so, yet it would be more liberal at least, if not more orderly and regular, to have the sentence pronounced on him in person."

The President remarked that he believed his mind was made up. He had fully come to the conclusion to sentence him at once.

Stanley then fixed the period for pronouncing sentence at a still shorter distance. He begged that the defendant might be allowed three days for his appearance.

"It will not do, Mr. Stanley," said the President, "although for your sake I should like to be as accommodating as possible."

"I do not ask it for my sake," answered Mr. Stanley, "but I ask it for the sake of public justice—for the sake of this Committee, whose proceedings should be humane and generous—for the sake of the absent young man, whose heart may be pure and innocent."

"Well, well, Mr. Stanley," said the President, "you are a clergyman, and it becomes you to behave with mercy even toward the guilty. I do not see how this postponement may in the least benefit the defendant. But, as I have said, I wish to be kind and generous for your sake, and, barring all further entreaty and remark on your part, I here agree to defer pronouncing sentence until to-morrow morning. Depend on it, Mr. Stanley, that no one but yourself could have prevailed with me, in this matter, to the same extent."

The friends of Percy Courtland were obliged to be satisfied. Although not completely successful, it was felt that something had been gained; but they doubted very much whether it would lead to any good result at last. The only one whose hope remained firm and unshaken was Braxton.



## CHAPTER L.

ON the memorable morning that had been fixed by the President of the Committee for pronouncing sentence on Percy Courtland, Braxton contrived to arrange an early interview with Agnes Russell. He was kindly permitted to confer with her in the apartment of the good padre, whose presence on that occasion was requested with his own.

The conflict caused by contending emotions, whenever we are called to meet a slow and sorrowful trial of our faith and patience, is always greater through the several stages of its progress than it is at the culminating point when it is about to lead to some decisive issue. The struggle is felt to be less as we gradually lose sight of all intermediate objects, and our minds become occupied alone with the expected result. Instead of laboring now to obviate the danger which has so long threatened us, our only concern is to meet it with ability and firmness. It was precisely in this state of mind that Agnes Russell found herself on the morning that seemed so pregnant with disaster to her dearest hopes and wishes. Both Braxton and the padre were astonished at the courage and resolution she manifested on that occasion. Her countenance betrayed the possession and enjoyment of an inward calmness and serenity, that imparted an additional interest to the extraordinary circumstances in which her fate seemed to be involved. She met her friends with the fixed determination of a person whose resolution has been taken, and who has made up her mind to act rather than longer to hesitate or think.

"I have but a single request to make, Mr. Braxton," said the courageous girl to her friend and benefactor. "Leave me now to myself. Do not seek to instruct or advise me. I am prepared to appear before the Committee this morning, and to act that part which duty and conscience would seem to dictate."



"It is well," said Braxton. "And yet the pious sacrifice, which I believe you are so ready to offer, may be too costly even for the important reconciliation it is calculated to purchase. I have indeed urged you to make the offering myself, and yet I can hardly tell whether in doing so I have not transcended the limits of both reason and duty."

"You have acted in good faith," Agnes replied, "and have but sought to carry out the dictates of your own generous nature. The rest, as I have said, remains with me. My only desire now is that I may be placed where I can witness the further proceedings of this Committee."

Agreeably to this request, and in accordance with what Braxton himself desired, it was agreed that Agnes should accompany the padre that morning, and take her seat in the gallery of the hall where the Committee was to assemble.

At the appointed hour this singular tribunal became organized for business. The President opened the court with quite a becoming degree of gravity, and having commanded the attention of the Committee before him, and indicated the sentencing of Percy Courtland as the first matter to be disposed of, he commenced his more regular and formal address to that body as follows,—

"But, gentlemen, before proceeding to the order of business I have mentioned, permit me to advert to one circumstance which has an important bearing on the matter in question. Since the conviction of the defendant a violent effort has been made by his friends to have the sentence postponed till some future period, and I suffered my own mind to be so far wrought upon as to consent to a delay of the sentence until this morning. But what, think you, is the additional evidence that has come to light since yesterday? Why, that this very Percy Courtland, who would fain hold himself aloof from the jurisdiction and control of this Committee—who perhaps regards our authority with contempt—who by some strange infatuation has enlisted the sympathies of several of the members of this honorable body in his behalf—whose desire illegally to appropriate the property of others to his own use, is only equal to the confirmed malice which rankles in his wretched heart—I say that this very Percy Courtland,



thus artful, dishonest, and malicious, after perpetrating the offense of which he has been fully convicted, has actually attempted the life of one of the members of this Committee, and has added to his other vices the character of a murderer and assassin."

"It is false!" exclaimed a voice outside of the bar, and which seemed to proceed from a person who was trying to make his way through the crowd, in order to place himself in a situation where he could be more readily seen and heard by the President and members composing the Committee.

"What is the meaning of that unmannerly noise I hear?" shouted the President as soon as the sounds of the voice in the crowd reached his ear. "Who is it that dares interrupt the deliberations of this honorable Committee?"

"That I dare do," said the bold intruder, who with a sudden bound placed himself directly in front of the President's chair. "You have already proceeded to condemn the innocent," he continued, "and not satisfied with that, you now seek to add further infamy to your iniquitous conduct by maliciously defaming the character of one who is denied the right of standing up in his own defense."

"Take the offender into custody immediately," cried the President to a sort of sergeant-at-arms, who was the officer appointed to preserve order in the Committee; "let him be brought before us, that he may undergo the penalty due to a contempt of this honorable court."

"I am here, Mr. President, to answer for myself," exclaimed the obnoxious offender. "I am ready to receive whatever sentence this tribunal may think my conduct has justly merited. But I have a right to ask that that sentence shall not be the result of any arbitrary will of your own. I appeal from your individual decision to the general sentiment that may influence the minds of this whole Committee."

"Officer, place this refractory citizen under arrest," reiterated the presiding functionary, in a still louder tone of authority. "Bring him before me instant. I am the organ of this body, to see that its deliberations be not disturbed, and that its claims be fully sustained before the world."



“And I,” rejoined his unflinching antagonist, “feel that my rights are as dear and as sacred as your own, and that they may be boldly defended against the encroachment of unjust and arbitrary power. Hear me, Mr. President—hear me for the sake of that justice which has been outraged in your person—for the sake of that community which has suffered so much from a cold, unfeeling, domestic tyranny—for the sake of that innate sense of oppression which is always felt when the natural freedom of man is presumptuously invaded. I stand here to-day——”

“Silence!” shouted the President again, with an expression of spiteful rage and indignation. “Cease your insane ravings about matters which you neither care for nor understand. Bring the prisoner forward, that he may become an example to others of the just judgment that awaits the guilty and rebellious.”

“Fellow-citizens,” exclaimed the offender, addressing his voice to the crowd outside, “I am not a rebel—I am not a violator of the laws, or a disturber of the peace of society. I have seen the folly, the madness, the wickedness of self-willed and self-constituted tribunals of justice in this country. I have felt their cruelty and unmercifulness in my own person. I have been exposed to their insults—to their shocking barbarities—to their murderous thirst for blood—and was only rescued from the blind fury of a mob by an interference that was as remarkable as it was meritorious and successful. It is because I have felt all this and suffered all this that I now warn you against the tyranny and injustice of this tribunal, whose decrees and sentences would appear to be as iniquitous as those of the misguided and ignorant mob. It is because I am convinced of the innocence of the victim who is bound and prepared for the sacrifice that I now stand up in his defense. Here, in the presence of this assembled multitude—in the presence of this listening Committee—before the appointed head who presides over the deliberations of this body—in the face of that Heaven which knows the motives and witnesses the actions of men—I pronounce the tribunal here organized to be partial, corrupt, and unauthorized, and I appeal to you, gentlemen, to protect your fellow-citizens—to save your children—to deliver your



friends—from the effects of its corrupt and unholy proceedings.”

The President of the Committee, as we have seen, made two or three fruitless efforts to silence the individual who had thus boldly dared to stand up in defense of truth and justice, but that individual only became the more earnest and confident as he found himself exposed to a more frequent and determined interruption. At length, however, he appeared to rivet the attention of his listeners in all directions. The President himself, although boiling over with anger, seemed at a loss to know how to treat an offender of so much boldness and address. The members of the Committee stared at each other, as if they half believed that what he was uttering with so much feeling had some foundation in truth. But the effect of his harangue was still more sensibly felt by the crowd of eager listeners, who on all sides thronged the avenues of the court-room. It was principally on this account that the members of the Committee were restrained from proceeding at once to extremities with the bold and fearless adventurer. They dreaded the fury of the mob even more than they did the enmity and revenge of Captain Lamberton. They very well knew what slight circumstances might induce the multitude to pursue a course diametrically opposite to that which, perhaps, they had taken on some other occasion; and the dread of such an issue, together with their own apprehension of the truth of what the speaker had uttered, caused them to observe a profound silence after he had brought his short but energetic appeal to a conclusion.

It was evident to all present that Captain Lamberton was becoming alarmed at a state of things that might possibly interfere very materially with his sinister and selfish projects. There was a restlessness and concern depicted in his countenance that plainly betrayed the misery of his mind. He conversed eagerly and anxiously with his fellow-members of the Committee, but did not seem to excite the sympathy, or receive the hope and encouragement, which his former communications with the same persons gave him reason to expect. Many began to suspect, what indeed had been growing plainer every day, that the unbounded influence he once exercised over the minds of his companions was gradually changing into a settled opposi-



tion to his views and principles. The wild, importunate, and incoherent manner which had marked his behavior for some time past, seemed to lend strong confirmation to these impressions, although none, as yet, felt sufficiently bold to hazard an open expression of opinion in contradiction to his own.

During the pause that took place at this stage of the Committee's proceedings, the President himself, as we have seen, seemed to be at a loss to know what course it would be best for him to pursue. Although he had just before made use of terms that were so entirely indignant, and had clamored incessantly for the arrest and condemnation of the person who had so boldly confronted him, yet when the intruder ceased speaking, his own voice appeared to have become suddenly paralyzed. He gazed round him for a moment in distraction and terror. Perhaps he too was apprehending danger from the multitude outside, who he could not but believe were watching his movements with intense interest, and who were possibly suffering their feelings to become enlisted in favor of law and liberty.

But Lamberton could no longer restrain himself. Springing to his feet with a sudden impulse—his eyes wildly glaring on the object of the court's displeasure—his fists clinched—his countenance inflamed—he cried out at the top of his voice,—“Seize the base reviler, who has dared to profane with his unhallowed lips this sanctuary of justice. Seize him, I say! Mr. President, why do we sit quietly here and suffer ourselves to be bullied into submission by a caitiff—by a wretch whose life was once forfeited to the just claims of popular fury and indignation? Seize him and punish him on the spot!”

“Let the hall be cleared!” exclaimed the President in great anger and trepidation. “Officer! call to your assistance a strong police, and clear the court immediately!”

But at that moment Darsie Hopkins rushed from the gallery into the arena below. “Fellow-citizens,” he cried, “we claim a moment's further audience. You are free-men, and are fully privileged to witness the deliberations of this assembled Committee. You are just men, whose duty it is to protect your own rights, and to defend the rights of your neighbors, if necessary, against the tyrant and oppressor. Suffer not yourselves to be imposed upon by the



exercise of an arbitrary authority, which has no foundation either in law or in reason."

"Treason!" shouted two or three voices at once in the Committee.

"Gentlemen, I am no traitor," returned Hopkins. "I but claim the privilege of defending my own person, and the persons of my fellow-citizens, against a usurpation of power, which is seeking to deprive us of our dearest rights, and to render us the willing slaves of unprincipled demagogues."

"Let the traitors be arrested and punished!" exclaimed Lamberton. "Officers of the court, we call on you to do your duty!"

By this time the inflamed multitude were so closely pressing round the bar, which separated the Committee from the crowd outside, that it was expected every moment they would penetrate to the very center of the hall. Presently a tumultuous shout was raised by two or three individuals who were collected opposite to the speaker's chair, and it was evident that the excitement was spreading among the people with alarming rapidity.

"Order! order!" shouted the President. "For God's sake, my friends," he continued, "do not convert this hall into a theater of strife and contention!"

"Down with the President of the Committee!" cried an outsider. "Huzza for Horace Baldwin!"

"Hopkins! Hopkins!" vociferated two or three voices at once from an opposite direction. "Let us hear something more from Darsie Hopkins!"

The sergeant-at-arms now entered through a private door back of the speaker's chair, and supported by a dozen stout and active young men, whom he had pressed into his service from the different streets and hotels in the neighborhood, he proceeded at once to lay hands on Baldwin and Hopkins. The President saw what was likely to follow.

"Hold! hold!" he exclaimed, in a loud and confused voice. "Not yet! not yet! I did not mean that. We will not yet place them under arrest. File off, and suffer the gentlemen to go at large. They are under our protection, and will not attempt to escape."

But it was now too late. The fury of the awakened multi-



tude without could be restrained no longer. The moment an attempt was made to arrest the bodies of Baldwin and Hopkins a rush was made into the very center of the hall appropriated to the Committee, every member of which rose to his feet, and became fully conscious of the imminent danger to which his life was exposed. Swords, dirks, and pistols gleamed ominously in different parts of the house, and the report of fire-arms immediately afterward rendered the confusion ten times more alarming.

It was at this terrifying crisis that a female was seen hurrying from her seat in the gallery, and forcing her way through the dense crowd until she arrived in front of the speaker's chair. That female was Agnes Russell. Her dress seemed to be suited to the occasion that called forth the energies of her remarkable mind. The color of it was dark-green, and it consisted of a short spencer or jacket, which fitted close to her body, the skirt below being composed of the same materials. She wore round her neck a coral necklace, which held in its center the likeness of her father, incased in a miniature covering of gold of superior workmanship, and resting gracefully on her bosom. Besides this there was no other ornament about her person, not even a ring on any of her fingers. Her head was uncovered, having committed the care of her bonnet to her faithful companion, Maggy, but her face was closely veiled, and a profusion of dark-brown hair flowed in glossy ringlets over her shoulders. She held in her right hand a scroll of paper, which seemed to impart a designation to her person, as if she had been employed on some mission of love or negotiation to her fellow-mortals.

The appearance of a female, standing as it were in the very center of a scene which threatened so much disorder and violence, was of itself calculated to produce an effect of no little moment to the peace and security of the persons by whom she was surrounded. In the space of a moment a deep and universal silence pervaded the astonished multitude. All eyes were fixed on the unexpected apparition, and all ears were strained to catch the first sounds that might proceed from her lips. As soon as she reached the position she seemed to be aiming at, she cast aside her veil, and looked boldly round on the crowd, whose attention by this time she had completely riveted.



Her face was pale and thoughtful, but there was an expression in her countenance so determined and collected, that its forceful spirit could hardly have escaped the notice of the most careless observer. Advancing a little closer to the President's chair, she exclaimed,—

“Sir, forgive the intrusion in this place of a weak young woman, whose only excuse for her conduct is the consciousness that she herself has been, in some measure, the cause of these disorders, while at the same time she cherishes the hope and belief that she may have it in her power to remove them.”

“What?” exclaimed the President, with a manifestation of the utmost surprise, as well as fear, depicted in his face. “How am I to understand all this? You the cause of these disorders? You the person who may be able to remove them? I am utterly at a loss to understand you.”

“You, sir,” rejoined Agnes, “may be at a loss to comprehend my meaning, but there is an individual in this assembly who has a perfect knowledge of what I allude to.” Then raising the scroll which she held in her hand, and pointing with it to the person of Captain Lamberton, she continued: “That individual understands me well. Tell him that Agnes Russell stands subdued, humbled, and submissive at his feet; tell him that he shall spare the men whom his insane zeal on my account is seeking to involve in ruin and disgrace; tell him to cease his persecution against my brother, against Percy Courtland, against Baldwin and Hopkins, and against God knows how many others, on whom his frantic schemes of selfishness are made to bear with intolerable anguish; oh! tell him that I yield all—that I forfeit all—and that he shall spare the innocent for my sake.” And now turning to the crowd, who by this time had succeeded in pressing more closely around her, she exclaimed:

“My dear friends—my fellow-pilgrims in a country where there is little to enjoy and much to suffer—do not render your condition harder by tumult and impatience; do not seek to assert your rights by force and violence. I do not ask you to submit to oppression, but I beg that you will endeavor to exercise mildness and forbearance—that you will reform by gentleness what can only be made worse by sedition and disorder.”



As soon as Agnes had done speaking, a loud shout from the multitude announced that she had been heard with favor and approbation. But the crowd continued to be uneasy and impatient. After what Agnes had said, they did not openly threaten violence, but they murmured in secret against the Committee, and expressed a strong determination to stand by Baldwin and Hopkins.

In the mean time the mind of the President had become confused and bewildered, and he was at a loss to know how to understand Agnes, or how to discharge the duties properly which belonged to him as the head of the Committee. At last he called on Lamberton for some explanation that might relieve him from his embarrassments. But that individual seemed to be as much bewildered and confused as himself. He, of course, understood perfectly well all that Agnes had said; but he was astonished at her boldness and resolution, and still more at the concessions the language she made use of seemed to imply. Under these circumstances, although he was on terms of the most familiar intimacy with the President, and had indeed made a partial disclosure to him of his views and feelings in relation to Agnes Russell, he could only answer him in language which, if not entirely unintelligible to that gentleman, was, at least, incoherent and unsatisfactory to the other members of the Committee, as well as to the great multitude of persons present who did not belong to that body.

"The young lady," said he, "has referred to transactions which I think it would have been quite as well she should have kept concealed within her own bosom. I do not pretend, Mr. President, to understand all she has said or alluded to on the present occasion. She has in so many words accused me of being a tyrant and persecutor. I deny the charge, and if the author were not a lady, I would pronounce her to be a base calumniator and liar."

To say there is something in the human breast, even in the breasts of those who are vulgar and ignorant, which always takes the part of female innocence and helplessness, would only be making a remark that is as trite as it remains true and uncontradicted. The moment that Lamberton threw out what was deemed an aspersion against the character of Agnes Russell, the minds of the surround-



ing multitude were excited to the highest pitch of resentment. A hundred voices were raised against the unfortunate man who was supposed to be so devoid of feeling and gallantry. Perhaps he was not understood—perhaps his meaning was purposely misapprehended—but from whatever cause it might spring, the crowd now became more restless and ungovernable than ever. They groaned—they hissed—they hooted—they demanded that some reparation should be made to the feelings of the insulted female—they threatened to lay violent hands on Lamberton. In the midst of this increasing disorder, the President had presence of mind enough to see that there was but one way left to put a stop to it. He adjourned the meeting of the Committee until the following morning.

The moment the adjournment was announced, the members made it a point to escape from the house with all the dispatch in their power. Captain Lamberton was the first to seek flight by means of the door behind the speaker's chair, and a majority of the rest of the members disappeared through various avenues with equal precipitation. The consequence was that in a short time afterward the tumult had completely subsided.

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## CHAPTER LI.

NOTHING was now talked of in every part of Sacramento City except the remarkable occurrences which had taken place on that memorable morning before the Committee. The public mind was dizzy with a thousand conflicting reports in regard to the exact nature of the transactions which had just expired. The members were far from being able to explain all they had heard and seen, and the very actors themselves, who had taken a part in that morning's proceedings, or rather in the tumult which grew out of them, had but an indistinct notion of the important consequences which were to result from their several performances. One fact, however, was certain to the friends of Percy Courtland. They had by the confusion which



caused the adjournment gained another day, which, although it was not much expected unless by one or two of them, might lead to consequences of the greatest importance to that individual.

Poor Lamberton experienced all the pain and embarrassment which such a state of things was calculated to occasion to his own bosom. He felt, although he could scarcely tell why, that he was growing unpopular. He regretted his own harsh proceedings against Baldwin and Hopkins, and dreaded the tumultuous spirit that had been manifested by the crowd in their favor. But above all he had reason to fear, what he never before could have anticipated, that the personal interference of Agnes Russell before the Committee, if it should be persisted in, would ultimately lead to a development of facts and circumstances that might prove disastrous to all his projects.

Laboring under these apprehensions, one of his first objects was to seek a private interview with the President of the Committee. To that gentleman he now freely unbosomed himself, and labored hard to bring him over to a still more thorough and complete acquiescence in the schemes he entertained toward Agnes Russell. He was persuaded to accompany Lamberton in person to the apartment of that young lady, who willingly granted them an interview when she was made acquainted with their wishes on the subject.

The purpose of these gentlemen was, to obtain from Agnes a more definite statement of the terms on which she would be willing to yield her person and fortune in marriage to Captain Lamberton, agreeably to her own proposition as hinted in her address to the President of the Committee that morning. They informed her that they still had it in their power to save Percy Courtland, to stay all further proceedings against her brother, and to abstain entirely from any additional punishment or censure so far as regarded the persons of Baldwin and Hopkins. Agnes was in a great degree unacquainted with the measures that had been concerted by her friend Braxton to save her from the plot laid for her by Lamberton. That individual had, indeed, led her to entertain some hopes that she might look for deliverance in the course of time by means that were only known to himself, but he never gave her any



certain assurance of ultimate success, and even, as we have seen, talked seriously to her on the subject of the great danger to which her friends might be exposed, unless she, in the event of certain contingencies, should be willing to offer herself up as a sacrifice for their safety. As to her brother, she had heard nothing from him since her short residence in San Francisco, and was unable to form the least conjecture about his place of residence or condition in life, except from the dark hints that had been occasionally thrown out to her by her friends. It is not to be wondered at therefore that she should have been willing to lend a friendly, perhaps almost an eager ear, to the suggestions made to her by Lamberton and the President. Had Braxton himself been consulted, he could hardly have advised her to act differently from what she did. Although it was now the third day of the session, neither Percy Courtland nor Governor Cartwright had yet arrived, and the great danger was that if they came at all it would not be until the end of the week, the time originally fixed on by the governor, and then it might be too late to save either Percy or his friend Alfred Russell.

But Agnes would consent to listen to the inducements held out to her by her anxious visitors but on one condition. "If," said she, "I am compelled to yield a reluctant acquiescence to the reasons so strongly urged for my submission, let it be done in public, in the presence of a crowd of witnesses, and before that tribunal which professes to have at its disposal the destinies of those who are dear to me, and whom I am anxious to save from reproach and punishment. Let a record be made of the compact, which shall be witnessed by the free hearts and hands of those who will revenge the injury, if ever an attempt should afterward be made to violate its awful solemnity."

These were terms which her persecutors were unwilling to grant. But she insisted on the justness of her demands, and only became the more firm as they sought the more to divert her from her purpose. At last it was agreed that she should appear the next day in court, and that without publishing to the world the stipulations entered into by either party, a formal act of oblivion, so far as regarded her friends, should be passed by the Committee, which it



was believed the influence of Lamberton and the President would be sufficient to bring about, after which Agnes was to sign a paper modified from the one she had carried in her hand the day before, and which it had been her intention to subscribe, if no other alternative existed by which her friends could be effectually screened from their enemies.

On the following day a more efficient police had been organized by the officer appointed to preserve the public peace, and the crowd of spectators, which was greater now than it had been at any time before, seemed to have been awed into quietness and order. But the threatening events of the day before were still fresh in the minds of the Committee ; and although an attempt had been made by Lamberton and his friend, the President, to sway them to their own purposes, it was found that this was a matter far more difficult to manage than had been at first conjectured. The truth is, the Committee began to feel ashamed of their own servile and obsequious conduct. Their eyes seemed to be opened at once to a sense of their disreputable weakness in submitting so implicitly to the dictation of one or two individuals, who thus far had exercised an unlimited influence over their deliberations. They felt as if they had done a very serious injustice to Percy Courtland, but they saw at the same time how disgraceful it would be for them to nullify their own proceedings, at the suggestion of those very men who had been the principal instigators in the perpetration of so much folly and wickedness. They knew that the conduct of Captain Lamberton had become such as to give offense to all, or nearly all, of his warmest friends, and that his character was rapidly sinking in the estimation of individuals of every class and grade of society. They became suddenly anxious to serve Percy Courtland, and were conscious they had it in their power to do so at once, but they were resolved to accomplish this desirable purpose in their own way, and not in accordance with the promptings of the President, which they justly regarded as the still more dishonorable promptings of Captain Lamberton himself. Their minds indeed, since yesterday, were not a little influenced by a dread of popular indignation, but they were persuaded that that indignation was now more particularly directed toward the



President and Captain Lamberton, and that the conduct of these distinguished persons, even where it appeared fair and honest, was viewed by the great mass of the people with doubt and suspicion. Laboring under impressions like these, it was not at all surprising, when the question was put as to wholly absolving Percy Courtland from the charges that had been lodged against him, that a very large majority of the Committee voted in the negative.

There were two persons who were especially affected by this decision, which, if not unexpected, was exceedingly unwelcome. One of these persons was William Braxton. That individual had all along regarded the transactions of the Committee with intense interest. He had watched, with nervous restlessness, the entrance of every newcomer into the apartment they occupied. He had scrupulously weighed all their suggestions, and carefully considered all their measures. But he began more and more to feel that there was little room for hope or encouragement. At one time, indeed, he thought it possible when the crowd, the day before, had frowned on the President, and applauded the speech of Agnes, that the rash and willful decisions of the Committee would have been effectually rebuked and overruled; but when he now beheld the same crowd passive, obedient, and subdued, he was made sensible of the little that could be expected to result from popular excitement and disgust. His only hope at last was in that terrible sacrifice on the part of Agnes, which he thought would be the certain means of evading the doom that awaited her brother and Percy Courtland. But he now saw that even that means was likely to prove ineffectual. Captain Lamberton was losing his influence over the Committee, and the Committee were resolved in future to be guided by their own counsels, and, as we have seen, confirm their own previous decisions. How truly sad and discouraging appeared the prospect of things around him! How anxiously he watched and prayed for the coming of Governor Cartwright, but with how little assurance and consolation!

The other person who deeply felt the influence of the Committee's decision was Agnes Russell. What was she to do now? The members of the Committee were against



her. The pledge that had been so solemnly and so confidently given her by Lamberton and the President of the Committee had failed. The public sympathy that had been raised for awhile in her favor was hushed. The harsh sentence was about to be pronounced consigning her lover to an ignominious punishment. The mockery of another trial was, perhaps, about to be instituted against her brother. She concluded that all influence had departed from Lamberton and the few members that might still adhere to him in the Committee—that the affairs of her own friends were now ten times more desperate than they had been while he himself controlled them—and that nothing now awaited those whom she wished to save but certain and irremediable despair and ruin.

While these melancholy thoughts were passing through her mind, a sudden movement was heard throughout the hall of the Committee. In a moment after a band of ruffians entered at a door opposite to the President's chair, and posted themselves in different places round the bar which separated the seats of the members from the listening multitude outside. It was now the President's turn to become arrogant. Every one knew that these men were bankrupt in principle and character, and had long been subservient to the purposes of Captain Lamberton. They had not yet been made acquainted with that man's growing unpopularity, and had been procured by him from the neighboring mines, during the recess of the Committee, with the view of destroying the energy and independence of that body should they manifest an intention of becoming refractory.

All this would have operated but slightly on the circumstances connected with the case of Agnes Russell, had not the two individuals who invited her, for the purposes we have narrated, the night before, become strongly impressed with the idea that she had in some way or other confederated with a majority of the Committee, in their schemes which they had concocted for the acquittal and discharge of Percy Courtland, and those who were implicated in the difficulties connected with his offense and trial. They felt certain that it was the design of the Committee eventually to free that young gentleman from all the evil consequences that might result from his conviction, and they supposed



that Miss Russell must have been made acquainted with a fact of so much importance. Indeed, they confidently suspected that it was through her persuasion that the Committee had so suddenly swerved from their fealty to the presiding officer, and had paid so little attention to the wishes of Captain Lamberton.

As soon, therefore, as the band of ruffians appeared, who were posted in different parts of the house for the purpose of aiding the President in his attempts to trammel the Committee, that officer pursued an entirely different course from the one which had been agreed on the night before. He called up, in the first place, the cases of Baldwin and Hopkins, speaking all the time with great vehemence, and pronouncing them to have been guilty of a gross contempt of the court over which he had the honor to preside. At the same time he utterly refused to hear them say anything in their own defense, and proceeded at once to sentence them for the alleged misdemeanor. Having gone through this ceremony with much pompous gravity, and held up the offenders as examples to deter others from perpetrating similar enormities, he committed them to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms. That officer did not immediately remove them; but merely placed them in a situation where he could keep a watchful eye over them until the court should adjourn at noon.

When the President had disposed of these two offenders, he proceeded to call up the case of Percy Courtland. Both Lamberton and himself were obstinate and determined in consequence of the triumph they had so completely achieved. They resolved from henceforth to have their own way, and that their own wishes alone should be consulted in regard to the nature of the sentence, and the time and manner of pronouncing it on the offender. Knowing that Agnes Russell as well as the Committee must bow implicitly to whatever course they might see proper to pursue, they feared not to show the extent of their power by acts that were eminently cruel and selfish. It was no longer a matter of compromise and negotiation between them and Agnes Russell. What they regarded as her cunning and dissimulation they believed had been fairly overcome by their own superior art and address, and they were determined that she should be brought to



see this in the light they viewed it themselves. It is more than likely that their intention was still to relent in the end, in order that Lamberton might bring that unhappy young lady completely under his own control. But they were bent on making her feel their power at present, which they regarded as the only certain means of making her respect it more absolutely in future.

The President from the commencement put on a stern and severe countenance, at the same time intimating that it would become his solemn duty to increase the sentence to be pronounced on Percy Courtland, in consequence of the assault which that individual had made on the life of Lamberton.

Stanley, as one of the members of the Committee, undertook mildly to remonstrate against a course which he considered too arbitrary and unjust. "It is surely improper," said he, "that the defendant should suffer for that in regard to which not a tittle of evidence was given before the Committee."

"It is not for you, Mr. Stanley," rejoined the unjust judge, "to form an opinion of testimony which you had no opportunity of hearing, and which was communicated alone to the ears of the President of this Committee. Your interference for the defendant on a former occasion was highly injudicious, and you see what has been the consequence of such indiscreet friendship."

"Sir," answered Mr. Stanley, "such friendship is but an ordinary dictate of humanity—is but a feeling which every honest individual in the community owes to his fellow-mortal, to his country, and to his conscience—owes to the cause of justice, and to this tribunal!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the President, "your zeal, Mr. Stanley, may carry you a little further than it is convenient or proper for this court to approve. This tribunal is able to take care of itself. It does not stand in need of your advice or friendship, Mr. Stanley."

"But it may stand in need of my prayers, at least," said Stanley; "and I think too, if it were not a little too wise in its own conceit, it might——"

"It might what?" cried the President, in a tone of exasperated feeling, which seemed to have borrowed its morbid character from the frenzy of Lamberton himself.



"It might profit by that spirit of resistance to tyranny which was so near vindicating its own rights in this house yesterday!"

"Treason again!" exclaimed the agitated President. "Officer, take the offender into custody! We sit here to defend our authority, not to be browbeaten by the presumption of an impudent rebel against the laws, even if that rebel should wear the solemn garb of a clergyman."

As soon as Letitia Stanley heard these words, so passionately uttered by the President against her father, she sprang at once from her seat in the gallery to the center of the court, followed by Agnes Russell. It was evident that Miss Stanley was seriously alarmed for the safety of her parent. She saw that he was not only threatened, but that he was about to be deprived of his liberty, and perhaps to be consigned, for aught she could tell to the contrary, to the gloomy cells of a prison or a dungeon. At least her fears suggested the most terrible consequences to her imagination. Turning therefore to the President, she implored him to desist from denouncing vengeance against her father. "You dare not, you shall not," she cried, "inflict punishment on one, whose greatest fault is that he thinks less of his own happiness than he does of the happiness of others."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the President; "away with this foolish, weak girl! How is it that I am beset by importunities that are so extravagant and frivolous? How is it that the moment I am about to pronounce merited condemnation on a convicted criminal, something is always sure to interfere to interrupt the course of public justice? Take this troublesome creature hence I say! We have business of a graver character to attend to than that which concerns the childish whining of a doting girl for an unwise and rebellious parent."

There was a tyranny in the manner, in the language, in the looks of this judicial despot, that embodied itself like a specter to the visual apprehensions of all who were present. Stanley from the beginning regarded him with a feeling of indignation and hatred, which it required all the religion and fortitude he was master of to restrain within bounds of moderation and good-breeding. But when this petty tyrant consigned his person with so little ceremony



to the keeping of one of his hired menials, and when a moment afterward he proceeded to speak in such contemptuous terms of his only child and daughter, all a father's feelings mingled themselves with the angry scorn and detestation of a more vulgar excitement. This was a crisis of no common alarm and danger to the humble divine as well as to the haughty President. What consequences might have followed no one can now possibly conjecture. But just at that time Molton Fairview rushed from the gallery, where he had been seated next to Miss Stanley, and seizing her by the hand led her quietly back to the place she had occupied a few minutes before. Then returning to a position in front of the President's chair, where Agnes Russell still continued to stand, as if charged with a mission she was at a loss how to execute, he was about to address the haughty chief of the feeble and enslaved Committee, when that courageous girl waived her hand in token of silence, and proceeded herself to address the President in the following language:

"Sir, you are triumphant—you are victor in this timid and irresolute assembly. And now what remains for me to do? I have been the innocent cause of all these difficulties—I have brought down on the heads of my dearest friends that vengeance which nothing but my own submission can expiate. Suffer me, then, oh suffer me to make the sacrifice! I here bow in deep humility before you—I here express my willingness to subscribe to any terms that may be exacted by my relentless persecutor. Tell Captain Lamberton I yield to all his requests. Only spare my brother—spare Percy Courtland—defer that hateful sentence you have been so long meditating! Spare the execution of your anger and revenge on the defenseless victims who have this day for my sake offended in your presence. Let the vials of your wrath be poured on me. But oh spare these willing sufferers, who if guilty at all are only guilty on my account!"

"This interruption is intolerable!" cried the impatient President. "Take this frantic girl away. I am determined to be hindered no longer. Let me proceed to the discharge of a duty which, if it had been performed earlier, would not only have redeemed the members of this body from the reproach of weakness and irresolution, but would



have saved us from a thousand difficulties which have been as ridiculous as they have been provoking."

"But may I not trust to that honor and justice which were pledged for our safety?" exclaimed the sorrowing damsel. "Or, if we be indeed faulty, may I not at least hope in that mercy which is the chief prerogative of justice, and which, if not more discreet and politic, is esteemed by the world as being more tender and amiable than justice itself?"

"Young woman, you are impertinent and troublesome," answered the offended President. "I am obliged to say, that if you do not retire immediately, I shall feel no hesitation in committing you at once to the custody of an officer."

"That I have already done for you," rejoined Agnes. "I have of my own accord placed myself in your custody; and may I not hope for that mercy which is twice blessed, which blesses him that gives and him that receives."

"There is no time, I do assure you," returned the man of authority, "to listen either to threats or flattery. I am not to be bullied by the one or deceived by the other."

"It is utterly impossible," said Agnes, "for a being so weak and helpless as I am to threaten, and I am certain my tongue was never taught to flatter. But oh I have learned in the hard school of adversity how to suffer affliction, how to humble myself before the powerful, and how to petition for mercy! That mercy is what I pray for now. It is my only hope under the severe trials which have fallen to my unhappy lot."

"Will no one relieve me from the annoyances of this ill-advised young woman?" exclaimed the President. "For the honor of this Committee, let us be rid at once of her senseless wailings and clamor."

He had hardly uttered these words before the sergeant-at-arms approached nearer to the spot where the afflicted girl stood, as if with an intention to force her by violence from the presence of the enraged head of the Committee. But his purpose was anticipated by one who had watched this whole proceeding with an agitating and intense interest. The moment he stepped forward to take hold of her arm, Molten Fairview rushed in between the officer and his prey, and placing his own person in front of the in-



sulted female, raised his hand in a manner that showed it was ready to be exercised for her defense and protection. In another moment a severe struggle took place between the youth and the officer, who were thus brought to assume a belligerent attitude toward each other. A sudden excitement was now again visible in every part of the hall. The President bellowed in loud and angry vociferations for order; the members of the Committee gazed at each other with something like stupid astonishment; the multitude outside showed but too plainly that they were ready, on the slightest pretense, in spite of the organized force by which they were surrounded, to embark in the first outbreak of tumult and disorder. In the midst of the confusion which everywhere prevailed, Molton Fairview, releasing himself from the grasp of the officer with whom he had been struggling, mounted a desk which stood in front of the President's chair, and striving to gain the ears of the Committee, he intimated to the members of that body that he had some information to give them which would completely justify the conduct of the young lady who had attempted to interfere with their deliberations, while at the same time it would deeply implicate the character of one of their own members.

When he had got thus far in calling the attention of the Committee to the charges he was about to prefer against the guilty captain, that distinguished individual rushed forward from his seat with all the fury of a madman depicted in his countenance, and laying violent hands on Molton Fairview, he called on one or two of the base rabble whom he had detailed for his evil purposes in the manner we have seen, and who, until this time, had been trembling with fear and anxiety without having the courage to repair to his assistance, to aid him in carrying out the commands of the President, and in banishing the refractory young pleader from the hall of the Committee.

It is impossible to say what terrible consequences might have followed if the captain's requests had been obeyed. But at this solemn crisis Agnes Russell again stepped forward as a public mediator, and as a victim ready and willing to be offered up for the deliverance and safety of those noble friends who were still anxious to stand by her in her distress. Placing herself directly in front of Captain Lam-



berton, and falling on her knees before him, she exclaimed, in mournful and passionate language: "Oh, sir, do not injure this noble young man; do not attempt to inflict punishment on these my friends, whose devotion to the interests of an unprotected female like myself, even if it is erroneously felt and exercised, merits your pity rather than your vengeance. See here—I now place myself completely within your power. I divest myself of all my pride, of all my scruples, of all my hostility to your superior judgment. You know what is best for me, and in this the day of my humiliation, as I hope it is likewise the day of my deliverance from extreme sorrow and suffering, here on my bended knees, I offer to sign this paper as a pledge of peace and amity between ourselves, and as a propitiation and offering freely vouchsafed for the redemption and happiness of my kind and estimable friends." Agnes rose from her kneeling posture, and unfolding the scroll which she had carried in her hand during the whole morning, as she had done the day before, she walked forward to the clerk's table and expressed an eager desire to place her signature to the instrument.

Without understanding the disinterested sacrifice she was about to make, all eyes were now immovably fixed on the heroic girl. Not a word was uttered, not a whisper was heard to disturb the mournful silence which hung over that breathless and anxious multitude. Captain Lamberton himself was deeply impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. But he knew how necessary it was that his prudence should get the better of his feelings. This, he saw, was the important crisis in his affairs, which, if properly regarded, would lead on to fortune. Only an hour before he had, like the President of the Committee, been determined to push matters to their utmost extremity, but now he plainly discerned the blindness and foolishness of such conduct. The multitude outside appeared to be again coming around to a clearer perception of the innocence and suffering of his victim, and a more violent suspicion of his own baseness and wickedness. The very guard whom he had so recently enlisted in his favor, and posted in the house to overawe the Committee, seemed to be deserting him. The minds of the bewildered crowd around him were returning again to their first state of freedom and independence, and there



was again danger that the Committee itself, as a necessary consequence, would turn against him. That, under these circumstances, Agnes Russell should be willing to yield to his solicitations, and sign the paper that was first agreed on between them, he regarded as an occurrence that was a thousand times more favorable to his schemes and wishes than he had any reason to hope. It would have been absolute madness in him not to take advantage of a state of things so highly desirable, and so little expected.

The President of the Committee did not at first view these circumstances in the same light in which they were apprehended by Captain Lamberton. He was still desirous if possible to subject the multitude to his own authority, and to overawe the Committee into a compliance with his own measures. It was on this account that he perseveringly insisted on reducing Agnes to silence, and interfered to prevent her from signing the paper in question at that time.

"Oh, sir," said she, "permit me to do an act which I feel it has become my bounden duty to do. Do not prevent me from relieving the sufferings of my friends. I am prepared to endure much in my own person, but do not compel me to witness the sorrows of others on my account."

Molton Fairview was still more earnest than the President on a subject of so much importance, but from an entirely different motive. He urged Agnes, with all the vehemence of his young and ardent nature, not to think of putting her name to that fatal paper. "It will utterly darken your future prospects," he whispered, "and disturb your peace of mind forever."

"I know it! I know it!" she exclaimed, "but this world to me has no future—this mind to me has no peace but what it is able to realize from Heaven."

Lamberton exchanged glances with the President, who all at once seemed to be made sensible of the course he ought to pursue. Leaning over from the elevated seat he occupied, he looked down on the flushed face and trembling form of Agnes below, and with affected sympathy for her sorrows he hypocritically remarked, "Be it then, my child, as you desire. I raise no further opposition to your will, and am inclined to believe you are right in sign-



ing that paper, as well in justice to Captain Lamberton, as for the sake of those friends who may be benefited by the act, although in a manner that I do not pretend to understand."

"Thank you! thank you kindly!" replied Agnes. "Now you are good, and I shall ever hold in remembrance that feeling of mercy—but, no! it is enough!" she repeated in a lower tone. "I must not act the hypocrite on an occasion so solemn as this. Now give me the paper," she said to Molton in a louder voice. "This instrument of writing, I trust, will be the means of freeing us from misery, if it does not restore us to happiness."

Molton, who had contrived to get the paper into his own hands, manifested a positive reluctance to let it pass again into the hands of Agnes. "Oh!" he cried, "do not, I beseech you, be so rash as to sign that terrible paper, which you yourself have confessed will rob you of your happiness in this world forever. Pause and think—if it were only for a day—if it were only for an hour—something may yet be left—something may yet be done. Do not give your hand to an act that may plunge you into the deepest, saddest misery!"

"Alas! my young friend," answered the despairing girl, in the same subdued tone that had marked the language of Molton, "you do not know Agnes Russell—my resolution is fixed—there is no further time for consideration. Give me the paper!"

Molton at last gave an unwilling assent to her request. He parted with the paper slowly and reluctantly. She took the instrument of writing from him, spread it before her, and then dipped her pen in the ink. Just as she was about to sign her name Molton stood between her and the light. She raised her head, and gently requested him to stand a little aside. She then leaned forward, and again put her hand to the paper. But before she had time to write her name a tremendous shout shook the very roof of the building. "Cartwright! Cartwright!" was now echoed by a hundred voices. "Russell! Alfred Russell!" was shouted in the same loud strain. The astonished girl lifted herself up and looked round, and in a moment afterward fell fainting in the arms of her brother.

The commotion that now pervaded every part of the



hall was striking and sublime. All hearts appeared to be agitated with surprise and alarm, and yet all eyes beamed with joy and gladness. The first shout was not perfectly understood, but as soon as the whole truth flashed on the minds of the astonished multitude, the noise of their joyful and repeated acclamations rose higher and louder. The noise continued without intermission, and it was some minutes before the hall was again restored to order.

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## CHAPTER LII.

To describe the feelings that agitated the bosom of Agnes Russell on her recovery from the swoon into which she had so suddenly fallen—her confusion—her surprise—her sense of the imminent danger from which she had just made her escape—her almost incredulous conviction that she was at the very crisis of her fate so unexpectedly restored to the arms of her brother—would require a skill in depicting the feelings and passions of the human heart, which it falls to the lot of very few in this world to exercise. We will confide the task of conceiving the truth of a picture like this to the reader's imagination, rather than attempt to portray it by any act of our own. We must remark, however, what every one of course will readily surmise for himself, that notwithstanding the overwhelming joy she felt at her own sudden deliverance, she was still impressed with a deep and anxious concern for the lot that awaited Percy Courtland. Retiring with her brother to the seat she had before occupied in the gallery, she felt unwilling to leave the house so long as the question in regard to the sentence to be passed on that individual was still pending before the President of the Committee.

But her mind, on a subject in which she felt such a deep interest, was not suffered to remain long in suspense. Governor Cartwright had politely assisted her brother in conducting Agnes to her seat, and as soon as he had acquitted himself of this task, he returned to the bar of the Committee, and took his own place as one of the members



of that body. His presence was cordially welcomed by his fellow-members, and, with but three or four exceptions, all seemed to turn to him as a leader, in whose intelligence, prudence, and energy, they might thereafter confide.

It is hardly necessary that we should acquaint our readers, that the person with whom they are now made acquainted by the name and title of Governor Cartwright, is the same gentleman who was introduced to their notice on a former occasion, whom they heard conversing with Henry Courtland in the room set apart for his little library, and who was so desirous of acquiring some new information on the subject of agriculture. It was not long subsequent to that interview that a restless spirit of enterprise, and a strong propensity to render himself acquainted with the wealth and resources of foreign countries, induced him to make a voyage to California. As had been the case in regard to all his other emigrations to distant lands, he soon became a favorite among the people, and acquired an influence which few other men could boast of to the same extent. He had been a member of the Grand Committee ever since his first visit to California, and his inherent dignity and uprightness of character, whenever he took a part in the deliberations of that strange compound of self-acquired legislative and judicial power, justly gave to him a control over their proceedings which would have been dangerous in the hands of almost any other individual. Unfortunately for the country, and for the Committee too, Governor Cartwright could not always make it convenient to attend the meetings of that body. There were two of its members who never felt easy when he did so. It is needless to say that these were Captain Lamberton and the President of the Committee.

It was evident that these two individuals were greatly disconcerted on the present occasion. Percy Courtland had not yet been sentenced. Could Governor Cartwright give his passive acquiescence to a measure so decidedly opposed to all wholesome precedent, and so clearly subversive of every principle of justice? The measure was yet to be tested.

After order had been restored to the Committee, the President proclaimed in a tone of voice that betrayed no



little embarrassment, that the task of pronouncing sentence on Percy Courtland still remained to be executed.

Governor Cartwright was on his feet in a moment. He made but a single remark, and that was, that he hoped the gentleman would be tried before he was sentenced.

The President observed that he had been tried, and found guilty by the Committee.

The countenance of Governor Cartwright now assumed a sternness and severity which borrowed much of its force from the dignified manner in which he approached his subject. And when he spoke, every succeeding remark became more earnest, and every additional sentence seemed to fall with tenfold weight on the nerves of Captain Lamberton and the President of the Committee. Nor did he refrain from remarking on the general weakness and inconsistency that had characterized the deliberations of that tribunal. But it is unnecessary that we should proceed to give a more detailed account of his speech. The object he had in view was so completely gained that all present wondered at the blindness and infatuation that had before characterized the proceedings of the Committee, and that body now, with scarcely a dissenting voice, resolved to hear the testimony which the friends of Percy Courtland said they were prepared to offer in his defense.

A backward glance at the events of our narrative will be sufficient to inform the reader of the general particulars, although not of the main strength of that testimony. Braxton gave evidence of the persecution with which Lamberton had followed that young man, even before he left the City of New York. Molton Fairview deposed to the charge which had been assigned him by Lamberton, to watch his motions, and to seek for the slightest pretext to disgrace and ruin his character. Mr. Stanley gave a circumstantial account of the conversation he had overheard between the two ruffians—Blakely and Maxwell—at the public house of Saunders, and of the embarrassment which the latter appeared to experience when he discovered that his connection with those two men had, in all probability, been discovered. Agnes and her companion, Maggy, rehearsed in the ears of the Committee the language they heard made use of by the same individuals at the time they attempted to arrest Percy at the old house; and Hopkins



(who, of course, with Baldwin, was now at liberty) confirmed the statements made by the other witnesses, by disclosing the true characters of the same desperate scoundrels, who made an open confession to him of being the hired ruffians of Captain Lamberton, and of their having robbed the Committee's treasure in the City of San Francisco.

But the principal witnesses were Saunders and Governor Cartwright. It will be remembered that Horace Baldwin had been commissioned to secure the former individual, and to produce his person before the Committee, if possible, as a witness. This task he was able to accomplish at considerably less trouble than was at first supposed, Saunders having, either from remorse or fear, made up his mind to testify against his confederates, and to explain the manner in which the box of gold, committed to the keeping of Percy Courtland, had been transferred from his custody, and exchanged for the one which was under the care of the person who had encamped that night at the edge of the wood, and who, in reality, was, as perhaps some of our readers have already conjectured, the long-sought brother of Agnes Russell. He asserted that it was himself who had contrived to substitute one box for the other—that he succeeded in accomplishing this purpose by going to the loft at midnight, where Percy slept, and removing the box deposited at the head of his bed, which he replaced, at the same time, by the one he had previously taken out of the custody of Alfred Russell, and which was immediately transferred to the vehicle at the wood where that individual was sleeping—that neither of the parties were aware, in the morning, of the exchange that had been thus effected—that Blakely and Maxwell professed to be employed by Captain Lamberton—and that that gentleman made the witness a present of a handsome gratuity the next time he called at his house. The evidence given by this witness would have been produced to the Committee, without waiting for the arrival of Governor Cartwright, had he himself made his appearance in time; but the truth is that Saunders and Governor Cartwright had traveled part of the way together, and they both arrived in Sacramento City precisely at the same hour.

The testimony of this last-named gentleman went to con-



firm what Saunders had previously deposed. Indeed, it was only because it was feared Saunders would not make his appearance at all, that Governor Cartwright's evidence was thought to be of so much importance. He went on to state that the witness who had just been examined disclosed to him, soon after it had occurred, the nature of the transaction that had taken place at his house, and the manner in which the exchange of the boxes had been effected. Governor Cartwright said that he himself was the owner of the box which had been committed to the care of Alfred Russell for transportation—that he was sure that individual could have had no knowledge of the substitution of one box for the other, as he had delivered to him, on his return, the box belonging to the Committee, instead of the one with which he had been intrusted, and which was the least valuable—that on being informed by Saunders of the imposition that had been practiced on the two young men, he concerted with Darsie Hopkins to draw forth the truth from Blakely and Maxwell, if possible, which was done to the extent that gentleman had stated—that as soon as he was aware of the charges alleged by Lamberton against Alfred Russell, he took that young gentleman under his own protection, until he should have an opportunity of vindicating his conduct before the Committee—and he further intimated as a fact which he thought ought to operate with very considerable force in favor of the defendant, that that person would hardly have been so blind as to deliver the certificate, showing the exact amount of gold that he was employed to carry, if he had previously abstracted a part of that amount and appropriated it to his own use. He stated, in conclusion, that he would have appeared before the Committee at an earlier day, but was not aware, until he was informed of that fact by an express messenger, who had only been able to reach him the day before, that his immediate presence was necessary before that tribunal.

The result of this testimony, as our readers have already anticipated, was the prompt and unhesitating acquittal of Percy Courtland. Nor was the innocence of Alfred Russell less clear to the minds of all who had attended to the investigation of the case that had just been disposed of. That individual was acquitted by general acclamation, ex-



pressed by the Committee, as well as by the crowd in every part of the house; nor did the sapient head of the singular body that had assembled in that hall, nor even Captain Lamberton himself, dare again to utter the most distant hint of any offense with which he had been previously charged.

Thus ended the wicked contrivances of a man whose selfish passions had so far blinded his judgment, as to render him absolutely insane in his endeavors to accomplish the unhallowed purposes he had in view. Discouraged, disappointed, and disgraced, he was compelled to endure the most humiliating agony of mind, and to behold the defeat of all his plans, at the very moment when he most expected to enjoy the fruits of his wickedness. But this to him was not the worst consequence of his folly. The bitterness of this moral death was not yet past. Not only the just retribution of a violated conscience began to afflict the unhappy offender, but his outward acts of persecution were now about to be turned against himself, and the evil he designed for others was threatened to be visited on his own head.

As soon as an ordinary degree of quiet was restored to the hall in which the Committee were assembled, Governor Cartwright again arose in his place, and addressed the presiding officer of that body in the following language:

"I believe, Mr. President, when I was about to enter this room a few hours ago, the floor was occupied by a young friend of Agnes Russell, whose laudable object it was to disclose to this Committee a series of facts and circumstances, which, if true, would have evinced a most shameful degree of malevolence and wrong on the part of Captain Lamberton against that young lady. He was not allowed by your honor to bring forward his accusations. But I trust that events have since transpired before this Committee, and in your presence, which are sufficient to convince every unprejudiced listener, and even the officer presiding over the deliberations of this body, of the justice and propriety of the young gentleman's intentions. As he, however, was not permitted to carry his intentions into effect, with his approbation I will now undertake to do it for him."

Molton Fairview at once nodded a graceful assent to



this request. "Hear! hear!" was echoed from every part of the house. The President looked abashed and uneasy, and Captain Lamberton fell back into his chair as if absolutely overcome and confounded. The speaker then continued as follows:

"In the name of justice and this Committee, whose duty it is to punish the guilty and defend the innocent—in the name of an honorable faith which has been violated—in the name of that gallantry and feeling which every true man cherishes for the opposite sex, and which in this instance has been wholly disregarded—I here charge Captain Lamberton with the design to coerce Agnes Russell into a marriage union with him against her own consent, and by acts of continued persecution that were wanton, wicked, and cruel."

"Hear! hear!" was again repeated by a hundred voices. "Proceed with the trial! Let the witnesses be examined!" was shouted by several members of the Committee.

We will not detain the reader by attempting to narrate all that took place on this memorable occasion. Not only was Governor Cartwright permitted to go into an investigation of the truth of these accusations, but there was an eagerness and enthusiasm manifested all round to hear the testimony that compelled him at once to call forward the witnesses.

To attempt to state the particulars of this testimony would only be repeating for the most part what our readers are already acquainted with. Braxton now felt at full liberty to disclose all that he knew on the subject of the baseness and duplicity, so long and so cruelly exercised by Captain Lamberton, toward the object of his extraordinary and selfish passion. He went back even so far as to the time when that gentleman on her account, and for the purpose of freeing himself from everything that seemed to interpose between him and the object of his pursuit, cunningly contrived to poison the mind of Percy Courtland against his parents and his brother, and persuaded him without their knowledge to accompany him to the City of New York. He recounted the perfidy and baseness which he exercised toward Percy when he had got him to that city—the measures he had planned for inveigling Agnes into his own custody, and which in all probability



would have been successful but for the firmness of Mr. Marshfield—the art and deception he had resorted to in order to bring her over to his views after they met in California—the pretenses he had invented to hold both Percy Courtland and herself under duress on his own premises—the charges he had so wickedly preferred against that young gentleman and her brother, all of which he more than intimated to Braxton he was induced to resort to for the purpose of bringing her to favor his unhallowed designs—and the plan he had laid to entrap her at the mission of Dolores. All this and much more was fully rehearsed to the Committee by Braxton, whose recital was listened to by the whole house with the most profound and intense interest.

Braxton's testimony was so lucid and positive that it did not stand in need of confirmation. It was, however, sustained by what had just before been proved on the trial of Percy Courtland before the Committee. It was further supported by Maggy and by Molton Fairview, and received additional strength from the statements made by Mr. Stanley and the old padre of what he had communicated to them of his designs previous to their meeting together at the mission house, where, as we have seen, it was his hope to have the marriage ceremony performed in their presence.

The last effort of a perverted understanding, when struggling to maintain its purposes and respectability in the eyes of the world—at that solemn crisis when its hopes are sinking—when its flattering promises are fading—when its guilty purposes are being transformed into the anguish of doubt and despair—is like the spasmodic breath that animates the human body at the hour of death. There is a momentary recoil—a bright flash that dazzles for an instant—a sudden renovation of strength and feeling—and then the mortal agony sinks at once into the silence and helplessness of the tomb. Just so it was with Captain Lamberton. He felt that the mass of testimony that had been adduced against him was powerful and overwhelming. And yet it was that very extremity of despair that animated him to make a last desperate effort to recover his ruined hopes.

“What, after all,” said he, “has been the proof brought



against me? I am charged with having endeavored to gain the affections of this young lady from a selfish and malevolent motive. But not one of the witnesses has been able to produce any positive testimony against me sufficient to convict me of an offense so base and dishonorable. The only evidence relied on is that which intimately blends itself with an inquiry that was got up for altogether a different purpose, and from which inferences are attempted to be drawn to my disadvantage. Before I am convicted, I demand that the opinion of this Committee be made up from something more than mere hasty and unfounded surmises."

At the conclusion of this extraordinary speech, Agnes Russell was observed to hand a paper to young Fairview, who immediately passed it over to Governor Cartwright. This was the letter written by Lamberton to Braxton, which it will be remembered Mr. Marshfield confided to Agnes a very short period before his death. As soon as the purport of it was explained to Governor Cartwright he went on to remark,—

"If any of us could for a moment doubt the sufficiency of the testimony, which Captain Lamberton would seem to intimate is not strong enough, I believe the document I hold in my hands would operate at once to remove such doubt. This is a letter written to Mr. Braxton by Captain Lamberton, bearing his own signature, which I am sure he will not dare to dispute. I will proceed to read it." He then read the letter before the Committee as follows:

"MY DEAR BRAXTON,—The confidence I repose in your fidelity and devotion to my interests encourages me to write to you with the utmost freedom. Agnes Russell must be gained at all hazards. I think I have effectually disposed of Percy Courtland, and, as you know, have made an arrangement with Marshfield to induce that young lady to visit California. It is of course my intention by these means to bring her within my power. When we meet together at San Francisco it will be easy for me to manage her brother, as I have already succeeded in managing her lover. But I may require your assistance there, as I feel I possess your friendship and sympathy here.

"Very truly yours,

"JOHN LAMBERTON."



As soon as this letter was read, it was followed by a universal shout of indignation from all parts of the hall. Lamberton now seemed to be fairly overcome with shame and vexation. He remained motionless in his seat, only that he glanced at Braxton a scowl of savage fury which evidenced the deep seated rancor and corruption of his heart. On the other hand, that scowl was returned by Braxton with the same peculiar expression of his eye which we have noticed on other occasions, and which was always sure to be manifested when he thought his feelings or his honor were wantonly assailed by others.

It is needless to say that Lamberton was convicted of mean and ungentlemanly conduct toward Agnes Russell, which conviction was received by the crowd outside with the utmost enthusiasm. A vote of censure was immediately passed against him by the Committee, and he was unanimously expelled from ever afterward holding a seat in that body. It was at the same time resolved that Blakely and Maxwell, if it should be in the power of the Committee to apprehend them, should be punished with the utmost severity, as well on account of the part they took in the disgraceful proceedings carried on by Lamberton against Percy Courtland and Alfred Russell, as for the act of larceny they had committed in purloining the property which they had been appointed to guard in San Francisco.

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## CHAPTER LIII.

ON the evening of that day which saw the acquittal of Percy Courtland, and the utter discomfiture and condemnation of Captain Lamberton, there were a thousand merry hearts in Sacramento, all exulting in the joy and satisfaction which these important events occasioned. The hotels were lit up with more than ordinary splendor, and every voice was busy in describing the scenes that had been witnessed, and the glorious result that had crowned the day's deliberations. But this feeling especially pervaded the bosoms of those who were assembled at the hotel



where Agnes Russell and her friends had taken quarters, and which had become the principal resort of the majority of those visitors who were most respectable in character and appearance. Governor Cartwright himself had taken lodgings at this prominent hotel, and it was agreed that Agnes and her friends should occupy the chief apartment, as the place where they could assemble to welcome and congratulate each other.

"And so, my young lady," said Governor Cartwright to Agnes, as soon as they had all assembled, "the long agony is over at last. You have escaped from the toils of your relentless persecutor, contrary, I believe, to your own hopes and expectations."

"Oh, Governor Cartwright," returned Agnes, "I have indeed met with a joyful, a happy victory! Nor is this victory the less dear to me because, next to that Good Being, who is always ready to assist the helpless and innocent, I owe its accomplishment to my friends, and especially, sir, to you. Oh, suffer me to say how sincere, how profound are my thanks!"

"You owe little to me," answered the governor, "compared with your great and lasting obligations to others. There is one man whose goodness you must and will remember as long as you live. That man, I am happy to see, is present on this joyful occasion. I allude to Mr. Braxton. It was he who contrived and arranged everything necessary for the justification and deliverance of your friends—everything that was wanted to convict your merciless and cruel persecutor. I know you have thanked him a thousand times already, but should you thank him a thousand times more, it would not be too often for the many and great benefits he has so nobly and so kindly bestowed upon you."

"You are right! you are right! my dear sir!" rejoined Agnes, "I cannot be too grateful to this excellent person! Oh, sir," she continued, addressing herself to Braxton, "permit me thus publicly to express my sincere acknowledgment of your noble and disinterested conduct. And whether your station in life be high or be low, I here proffer you my warmest, my sincerest gratitude for services, the memory of which I will carry with me to the grave!"



"Forbear, most worthy young lady," returned Braxton, "an expression of feeling which is the less necessary, because the person to whom it is addressed has not only anticipated its kindness, but is prepared to dispense with the unmerited honor which it would seem to imply. The opportunities we may meet with in life of discharging high and important duties are but the dispensations of a kind Providence, calculated to exalt our own virtues, if we have any, for which we cannot be too thankful. That the past events of my checkered existence have been in some measure identified with your own, Miss Russell, I cannot but esteem as a most kind favor and blessing. That I have been able in some little degree to serve you, I am conscious has been a very valuable means of benefiting myself. Let that consideration alone constitute my best, my happiest reward."

"And yet," answered Agnes, "I would not be deprived of my own share of the benefit. Remember, Mr. Braxton, the exercise of gratitude is itself a blessing wherever it exists in the human breast. While I do not seek to deprive you of that noble satisfaction which is always the reward of disinterested benevolence, neither will you seek to deprive me, as I trust, of that humble satisfaction which has its source in a feeling and thankful heart."

"All persons," said Braxton, "have a right to enjoy that full measure of satisfaction which springs from good intentions and upright actions. Only let us take care how our own flattery, or the flattery of others, inspires us with a spirit of pride and self-conceit."

"The caution you suggest," rejoined Agnes, "is not without reason; and yet, so far as regards yourself, I could hardly believe that you possess many of the qualities of what the world calls a proud man."

"Alas!" cried Braxton, "how little do we understand each other's hearts, and how still more imperfectly do we understand our own! Pride! self-conceit! they have been the besetting sins of my childhood, of my youth, and of my manhood. I was never in my earliest years balked of some darling gratification, but that I obstinately persisted in throwing the whole blame on those who were assiduously endeavoring to soothe me by their kindness. I was never in my youth corrected for a fault, but I per-



versely maintained that I was better informed than my instructors. And when at last my mind expanded into the light of maturer years, I turned my scornful back on the world, and because I thought my talents and attainments were not sufficiently flattered and respected, I assumed a character which did not belong to me, and concealed, under a ridiculous disguise, the aspirations and longings of my real nature. And it was pride again that urged me to rise above my assumed character, and enter on the career of a new life. I desired to advance myself to a station where I might command the respect and applause, and where I could win the honors and distinctions, of the world. But in my efforts to reach the position my soul coveted, I had soon reason to suspect that mere worldly exaltation could hardly be purchased, except at the expense of a corresponding moral depression."

"And so you were humbled in your own eyes," said Agnes, "and consequently became an altered person. From the folly of the past you borrowed wisdom for the future. It is said that this kind of experience is not unusual in the world. And yet," continued Agnes, casting her eyes around, as if in search of some one whose image had just then pictured itself to her mind, "who does not wish that it was felt oftener? who does not desire to see its full blessings poured on the head of the lonely, the forsaken, and the wanderer?"

"On some near and dear friend, I suppose you mean," observed Governor Cartwright, "some one who has been exposed to the bitter blasts of adversity, and in whose welfare you feel a deep and abiding interest."

Agnes blushed for a moment, and then calmly replied, "We must patiently hope for the best."

"Yes," said Governor Cartwright, "and our patient waiting, if we are but true to ourselves, will sooner or later be crowned with a happy realization of our desires and wishes. At least so much I trust will be vouched by the gentleman to whom I am now about to introduce you."

On speaking these words he stepped apart to a side door, against which he gently knocked, and in a moment afterward Percy Courtland entered, and stood in the presence of Agnes Russell. Something must be left to the imagination of the reader whenever there is occasion for the exer-



cise of a passion or feeling which is too deep for the coloring of ordinary description. Our feeble powers would entirely fail us if we should attempt to portray the emotions which each of these parties must have experienced at this sudden and ecstatic meeting. None could possibly describe these feelings so well as themselves.

It is unnecessary that we should remind the reader of what he will readily conjecture himself, that Percy Courtland had arrived in Sacramento City that morning in company with Governor Cartwright and Alfred Russell, and that he was present at the hall of the Committee during the entire period of that day's proceedings. But it was purposely arranged by the friends of both the parties that no interview should take place between himself and Agnes Russell until the ensuing evening. The result of that interview we have just narrated in such terms as we found to be within our power.

When the two friends, or the two lovers, if that phrase should be considered more appropriate, had become so far composed as to mingle freely in the conversation of the other parties who had assembled at the hotel, Governor Cartwright was induced to make some remarks that were listened to with deep interest by all who were present. Addressing himself to Percy, he proceeded to say:

"I shall never forget the two or three hours I had the pleasure of spending with your father, at Courtland Hall, the last time I was in the State of New York. I soon found him to be not only a man of my own tastes in the management and choice of his agricultural pursuits, but a person of a highly liberal and cultivated mind, and a warm enthusiast in extolling the advantages and peculiarities of his calling. I admired him as a veteran pioneer in the great cause of human progress and improvement. When Mr. Braxton told me your own story, in connection with that of Miss Russell, and informed me that you were a son of that same Henry Courtland whose originality of thought and genius I once had occasion so much to admire, and from whose enlightened knowledge I derived so much real benefit, I could not doubt for a moment the truth of his statement, and my whole heart felt the full force of the appeal he had framed in your behalf."

The friends and admirers of Agnes Russell who were



at that time in California, perhaps never spent a happier evening than that which they enjoyed on this memorable occasion. Hopkins and Baldwin were intoxicated with joy at the idea of such a signal triumph to their dearest hopes and wishes; for so ardently had they espoused the cause of Agnes Russell, and those connected with her, that they could not do otherwise than regard that cause as personally and emphatically their own.

"We do well to rejoice, my dear Hopkins," said Baldwin, "for I really feel quite as much relieved at the events of this day, as I did on that solemn occasion when Molton Fairview so nobly interfered to effect my personal deliverance from the felon's doom that had been pronounced on me by the infuriated mob."

"Yes," answered Hopkins, "when they were going to hang you upon a gibbet without the intervention of judge or jury, according to the rudimental principles of Lynch-law, a code as arbitrary and cruel almost as the heart of the merciless tyrant who presides over the deliberations of the Great Committee. But I was never informed precisely of the manner in which you made your escape."

"I have already told you," rejoined Baldwin, "that it was effected through the agency of Molton Fairview. There he stands. He can best explain his own movements."

"Just so," remarked Hopkins; "but there is no occasion to trouble Molton on the subject. I believe in my heart that the true element of bravery was at the bottom of it all, and that his mother's image was the goddess of war urging him to the combat. I suppose it was the same spirit that animated his bosom against Blakely and Maxwell, when he became the champion of Agnes Russell in opposing those two ruffians at the hotel in San Francisco."

"Rather say it was our friend Braxton who inspired me with daring at that time," observed Molton; "he had just explained to me the villainy of Lamberton, and told me how easy it would be, before leaving the city, to awe his blackguards into fear and submission. I was induced to undertake the task accordingly."

"All right, my boy!" exclaimed Hopkins, "I think your intentions are most capital, although not always successful. For instance, to-day you found it an up-hill business



in contending against that old brute of a President, and I guess you would have entirely failed, had not the good governor stepped in so opportunely to your assistance."

"I must confess," replied Molton, "that I found it rather a hard task to deal with the obstinacy and wickedness of the old gentleman on the bench. But my hope was to reach him through the crowd below. I think that was not a vain or an ignorant hope. It would indeed have required a little time to put the materials in order, but once arranged they would have been easily kindled, and the flame might have burned much higher than the President's chair. But come, these are matters that require no further discussion at present. The victory has been gained, and it matters but little what hand struck the successful blow."

Here the conference between the parties ended, and the young men entered into the amusements and conversation of the evening, according as they were severally led by their different tastes, dispositions, and feelings. But there was one person present who had listened to the language that had passed between the two speakers with the most profound interest. Governor Cartwright eagerly caught up all that was said on the occasion, and he was especially struck with the two or three last remarks that fell from the lips of Molton Fairview.

Before the company dispersed it was discovered that a remarkable unanimity prevailed among them on the subject of returning to their native land. Alfred Russell had so far arranged his business as to remove every obstacle to his getting off in a reasonable time, which object he was now the more anxious to accomplish for the purpose of going home in company with his sister. Percy had seen enough of California to wish to follow their example. Braxton had realized a fortune, and his only concern was how to dispose of it properly. Molton Fairview had been successful in collecting much of the precious metal, which he was now only desirous of converting into money, and pouring into the lap of his kind-hearted and affectionate parent. Hopkins had spent his treasure as fast as he dug it out of the earth, but he was sufficiently prudent to retain enough to carry him home, which he was the more anxious to reach since he had made the discovery of the



death of Mr. Marshfield, whose mild and paternal counsel he expressed a strong resolution to follow in future. Mr. Stanley and his daughter considered that their mission would end as soon as an adjournment should take place of the Grand Committee; and Baldwin seemed to be the only person among them all who expressed a wish to prolong his stay in the land of gold, with the fond hope of still being able to make some provision for his poor wife and children. The great question now agitated among them was, whether they might not all sail home in the same vessel. But the company broke up before coming to any resolution on the subject.

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## CHAPTER LIV.

THE next morning Percy Courtland paid an early visit to his friend Agnes, whom he found sitting alone in her own apartment. This meeting had the effect of bringing back past days, and reviving former recollections.

"Who would have thought two years ago," said Percy, "that you and I, at the present time, would be sitting together under circumstances not a little astonishing, in an apartment of a public hotel in California? How remarkable have been the events that led to this unexpected meeting!"

"The love and wisdom that are so wonderfully exercised by that Providence which suffers not a sparrow to fall uncared for on the ground, may not always be understood, but we may feel abundantly assured that every event which happens to us in this life must have for its object an end that will fully justify the means employed to bring it about. This is a world of effects rather than of causes, which are so remotely traced that it is not at all surprising they should be as imperfectly comprehended. It has been wisely said, that where we can't unriddle we should learn to trust."

"But you will admit," said Percy, "that it is exceedingly hard to become reconciled to occurrences which in their



results would seem to be attended with nothing but cruelty and suffering, without any alleviating circumstances to atone for the misery which is so painfully experienced by the sufferer. For instance, had your own heroic intention to save your friends from the malice of Captain Lamberton been carried into effect, who could have pretended to account for the wisdom and necessity of a sacrifice which would have been attended with nothing but evil to the person who had so generously prepared the offering?"

"It is not reasonable," answered Agnes, "that we should imagine an occurrence which in reality has had no existence. But the very case you mention is a striking instance of the particular interference of a divine Providence. The moment the catastrophe was about to happen—at the very instant the darkness became greatest—a sudden illumination spread like a flash of lightning to hasten a result very different from that which had been expected. But supposing it had come to the worst, and I had been obliged to sign that obnoxious paper, I was well aware that even then I should not be deprived of every chance of escape. I was not suffered to forget, at that terrible crisis, that I carried in my pocket the letter written by Lamberton to Braxton, which in itself constituted very strong evidence of the fraud attempted to be perpetrated against me. That might have saved me at last, or, if it had not,—if the contract could have been regarded as valid,—I should at most have considered the required sacrifice as a necessary means to purify my own heart, and at the same time perhaps to purify the hearts of those whose lasting welfare I felt sincerely desirous to promote."

"And yet," rejoined Percy, "the remarkable events that distinguished both of our lives during a given period have sometimes appeared so dark and mysterious, and even now cause my mind to be infested by so many doubts, that I feel how impossible it is for me to see this subject in that clear light which seems to give so much satisfaction to your own understanding."

"Percy Courtland!" exclaimed Agnes, rising from her own chair, and approaching closer to the spot where her lover was seated, "I am but a feeble girl, and would not willingly indulge in disquisitions that are unsuitable to my sex, or to my circumstances in life. You are possessed of



reason and I of feeling, and each of us, in our own way, may arrive at truth if we are but willing to seek for it in simplicity and honesty of purpose. It would be presumption in me to affect to become your instructor, and I have scarcely more than a single remark to make. But think for a moment. Ought not our past experience to teach us a lesson of immense value to our future happiness? Have not I been taught in the hard school of adversity how to hope, how to trust, how to become resigned and contented, in the darkest night of sorrow and affliction? Have I not been taught to confide with child-like simplicity in that unseen arm, which leads us and guides us without doing violence to our own freedom of choice? Have I not been made sensible that God's benevolent designs are most clearly manifested in seasons of the greatest extremity? And how is it as regards yourself? Have you less reason to rejoice in the lessons that have been taught you from above, in the knowledge that has been so wonderfully elicited from your recent experience? Is not your heart less proud and lofty than it was before you met with sorrow and disappointment, and do you not begin to distrust your own wisdom and discernment? Do you not begin to see how vain it is for you to eat the bread of carefulness—to sit up late and to rise up early—unless the blessing of Heaven is made to rest on your own humble exertions? Do you not feel perhaps that you committed a great error—that you manifested a great weakness—when you so suddenly and sullenly forsook the kind assiduities of your parents and friends, to become a wanderer over the face of the earth? And was not this knowledge worth learning and worth suffering for? Was it not worthy the teachings of the divine Providence? Say not, then, that you cannot see the love and wisdom that have accompanied you in all your wanderings? They are indelibly stamped on every event of your life. They are intimately interwoven with all your pursuits and adventures, and with all your purposes. They as certainly accompany you through good and through evil, as light and darkness accompany the earth in its revolutions round the sun."

Percy was not permitted to frame a rejoinder to the remarks made by Agnes, for just as she was about concluding the grave homily which, against her own taste



and opinion, she had been induced to labor with more than her usual carefulness, her brother entered the apartment.

"Here is Alfred!" she exclaimed. "He looks like the smith in Shakspeare, who suffered his anvil to grow cold while devouring the news which was so lavishly reported by his neighbors. Now, do tell me, Alfred," she continued, "how the public pulse seems to beat this morning."

"It is certainly a little disordered," observed Alfred, "and perhaps not the less so on our account. We have become the great lions, or at least the great center of attraction, to the busy multitude, and if not gazed at, we are certainly a good deal talked about. Governor Cartwright is pronounced to be the greatest man in all California, and you the greatest woman in all America. Thus you see what a sudden rise our fortunes take whenever we succeed in enlisting the dear people on our side."

"Oh, ay!" exclaimed Agnes, "I understand you. We become great by acclamation. I have just been trying to comfort Percy under his troubles with the assurance of a different kind of greatness. But I am not unwilling that he may enjoy both, provided only that he learns how to do it in moderation."

"Why," returned Alfred, "I thought that Percy's disappointments had been turned into successes, and that the murmuring of his discontent had been exchanged for the exultation of triumph. Indeed, Percy," he continued, addressing himself to his friend, "you have only not been the chief conqueror because you have not been the chief mourner, and hence it is that you ought to be fully satisfied with your share of the victory."

"On an occasion like this," answered Percy, "I feel that I ought not to be sorrowful, and that I ought not to complain. And yet there are sometimes causes of discouragement to the human heart which it requires more than one triumph to remedy and remove. In the midst of all the joy which gladdens the minds of others, what real cause have I for triumph or exultation? Where are the victories I have gained—where are the honors I have won? I was basely reproached with a disgraceful offense, from the charge of which, it is true, I have been honorably acquitted. An attempt was made to destroy my good name in the estimation of my fellow-men, from the effects of



which I trust I have wholly recovered. I have been subjected in a foreign country, and among strangers, to a temporary deprivation of my liberty, to labor not suited to my habits and constitution, to hardship and want, to which I had never before been accustomed, and have borne it all without sinking into absolute despair. But what has been the reward of my sufferings? I feel as if all this labor and sorrow had been spent in vain. I have been wholly disappointed in my hopes and expectations. I am still helpless and impoverished—timid and irresolute—a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth. I cannot remain here—I am too proud to return home. I have certainly committed a most capital blunder, which I find it utterly out of my power to correct, and the evil of which I only feel the more keenly as I gain a clearer insight into my own weakness and folly.”

These words were uttered by Percy with a passion and earnestness which occasioned in the mind of Alfred, and especially in that of his sister, a deep feeling of uneasiness and concern. They saw at once that they had not previously comprehended the extent of that hidden sorrow which had been preying on his heart. Percy was mild, was gentle, was moderate in his desires and wishes, but at the same time he was proud and sensitive in the extreme in regard to what he supposed his friends expected him to achieve in the world. He felt as if he had disappointed them, and had not done justice to his own idea of the place he ought to fill in society. He labored unquestionably under a morbid delusion, and all his thoughts on this subject were but the false suggestions of his own imagination, but this did not render them any the less painful on that account. Agnes was the first to perceive the true state of his feelings, and to devise some further arguments, which she thought might possibly administer to his relief and comfort.

“I am astonished,” she remarked, “at the low estimate you place on the benefits to be derived from your own experience, and of the erroneous ideas you cherish respecting your own peculiar destiny. How have you been more unfortunate than all other men? Has it been because you have been exposed to hardships and dangers at the outset of life, and have not realized those anticipated honors



and successes which thousands of young men dream of like yourself, but never fully enjoy according to their previous ideas of what awaits them in future? Why, this kind of disappointment should be one of your chief causes for humility and thankfulness. It is but another instance of that kind providential interference of which we were speaking awhile ago. It is intended to moderate your ardor—to check the exuberance of your imagination—to sober and enlighten your judgment—and to fit you for a less brilliant, but a more useful station in society, perhaps, than would have been the object of your own choice!”

Percy cast his eyes on the floor of the apartment, and for a moment remained silent and embarrassed. Then looking up more cheerfully, he remarked,—

“There is undoubtedly some truth in what you say—nay, I cannot but think that your observations are fraught with nothing but the truth. And yet it is exceedingly hard to be compelled to return home not only without having met with a moderate share of success, but without having realized anything but absolute sorrow and disappointment.”

“Tut! tut! Percy,” exclaimed Alfred, “this is certainly looking at the dark side of things. The very disappointment of which you complain will make you a wiser and better man hereafter.”

“Ay, and a happier one too!” replied Agnes.

“And yet I must return home like a madcap and a beggar—with folly attending me on one side and destitution on the other.”

“And with a thousand kind-hearted and loving friends to laugh good-naturedly at your folly, and to relieve you of your destitution,” said Agnes.

These last words were uttered by that young lady with an expression of countenance so benignant and gentle, and with a tone of voice so earnest and affectionate, that Percy gazed on her with a feeling that was equally warm and tender, and that enabled him at once to penetrate the very depth of her heart. Laboring under an emotion so grateful and consoling, he could not help exclaiming,—

“Oh, Agnes! then I am not despised by you—you at least will not forsake me!”

“Proud, mistaken, self-tormentor!” she rejoined,—“what



could ever have induced you to indulge in such unaccountable nonsense? Go talk to Alfred. He will tell you that if you could but regard yourself with only half the esteem you are regarded by your friends, there would be nothing to prevent you from becoming a cheerful and happy man."

Percy turned from Agnes without uttering another word. He now seemed to realize some consciousness of his own unreasonable suspicions—some conviction of his own morbid sensibility of feeling. He could not help regarding her exclamation as a rebuke that was keenly administered, but that was kindly meant, and which was intended to bring him again to his sober senses. He walked across the room, and entered into a protracted conversation with her brother.

It was not long before Alfred succeeded in wholly dispersing the gloom that had so unhappily taken possession of Percy's mind. He showed him how unreasonable were his complaints—how much he had to expect, and how little he had to regret. The consequence was that Percy admitted into his bosom a totally different train of thoughts from that in which he had been so long indulging. He took a more cheerful view of the past as well as of the future. He began to wonder at his own weakness and folly—at his own pride and selfishness. He now eagerly turned his attention toward home, and it was speedily arranged that the three friends should leave California together as soon as their business transactions were fully completed.



## CHAPTER LV.

THE season at Courtland Hall had again advanced to that period of quiet enjoyment when the harvest for the most part has been taken in, when the later fruits have matured for use, and the morning atmosphere has become more cool and bracing. Henry Courtland still continued to be busy on his farm, but it was not with employments that demanded as formerly the almost entire exertion of his physical powers. He now became interested in more pleasing and less pressing engagements. He walked to and fro over the domains of his extended property, which seemed like himself to be in some measure resting from its fatigues, and began with a serene complacency to consider the result of his labors. Sometimes he exulted in the abundance and rational comfort by which he was surrounded, and perhaps was insensibly indulging in the fond consciousness of possessing wealth, if not power. But at other times he seemed to feel the insufficiency of all earthly enjoyments. If on the one hand his labors had been crowned with an uncommon allotment of pecuniary prosperity, he had on the other been brought to encounter his full share of the evils and sorrows of life.

It was at this period that he was one day seated in the portico fronting his dwelling, and was giving way to a series of gloomy reflections which caused an unusual degree of heaviness to rest on his mind. His son still remained absent, nor had he received any satisfactory tidings concerning him calculated to remove his fears and anxiety. He wondered why it was necessary that he should be compelled to suffer this melancholy bereavement. He had been long looking for the dawn of a brighter day—for the revelation of a more blissful period—when the dark clouds that overshadowed him should be dissipated, and a glorious morning should succeed the frowning night that encircled his path. But at that crisis of his experience his hope was well-nigh gone. He felt sad and sorrowful, and in

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vain attempted to pierce the darkness which occasioned so much uneasiness.

While thus employed—dissatisfied with the past—anxious about the future—unmindful of present enjoyments—his neighbor Thomas Russell made his appearance, and took a seat at his side. Before long they were both joined by Mrs. Courtland, and by Mrs. Truehope and her daughter Clara.

“No tidings yet from those we love best,” said Mrs. Courtland. “I once thought that friends could be permanently parted by nothing but the eternal world, but I now find that even in this world there are barriers of separation that sometimes as effectually exclude us from each other as the grave itself.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Truehope, “the whole world would seem to be a mighty sepulcher, which at times voraciously ingulfs the living as well as the dead. There is a moving mortality around us, which is confined to no particular spot, but which in its desolation and loneliness renders the whole habitable globe one general Golgotha.”

“The world is gloomy enough,” observed Clara, “and yet I cannot help thinking that we too often invest it with a darkness that does not belong to it. The images you have just made use of are terrible to my timid apprehension, although I must believe they are only too true so far as regards my own sad experience.”

“The grave! the grave!” repeated Mr. Russell, as if talking to himself more than to those around him. “Great God, our friends bury themselves alive! Such a thought never entered my mind before!”

“But if they are alive,” added Mrs. Courtland, “they may be exhumed from a sepulcher which is often seen even to cast forth its dead after the long lapse of years. Let us still hope that in our own cases we may witness a resurrection that will present the objects of our love so entirely transformed and renewed in beauty and perfection, as amply to repay us for the long days and months that have shrouded their graves in darkness.”

A general silence now pervaded the ranks of this little assembly. Not a word more was heard for some minutes, but each one present seemed to be deeply absorbed in his own thoughts. Henry Courtland had refrained thus



far from uttering a single remark. He sat with his arms folded on his breast, his eyes cast down, and the features of his face overcast with an expression of melancholy sadness so deep and distressing as to excite the attention, if not the commiseration, of the circle of friends by which he was surrounded. At length Mr. Russell proceeded to remark:

“And here is Henry Courtland, as effectually buried too for the present, as if we had just laid him, with all his busy employments, his joys and his sorrows, in the cold tomb, and had consigned his spirit and his understanding to a silence equally stern and unyielding.”

Our worthy farmer was roused from his reverie by this remark, and looked round him with concern, and perhaps with some degree of shame, on account of his supposed weakness. He attempted to rise from that state of dejection into which he had no doubt reluctantly fallen, but which he found it extremely difficult to overcome. It was evident that he felt a weight on his bosom that gave him very serious uneasiness, and the pressure of which no one could as fully understand as himself. With all his wisdom and practical good sense—with all his hearty, genial sympathy for the simple pleasures of a country life—with all his love of nature, and his aim to render himself and others happy—with all his good feeling and his pleasing methods of showing it—with all his philosophy and his religion—he found himself not entirely impregnable against that concealed grief which was preying on his heart. He tried to hope—he tried to become resigned—he endeavored to cast his fears to the wind, and to place his confidence in that almighty arm which he knew was constantly exercised for his happiness. He had, however, been for some time laboring under the effects of a wounded spirit, which none of us can bear with patience and equanimity. The grief of his bosom was truly painful, and it began to manifest itself in a fearful encroachment on his general happiness. But we have said that Henry Courtland roused himself from this state of dejection and misery, although the command he was able to exercise over his morbid feelings was hardly equal to the earnestness of his resolution.

“Let us not talk of the grave yet, my friends,” he observed, in answer to the remarks which fell from the lips of



Mr. Russell. "Each of us has something to live for and something to do, although I know from my own experience how very difficult it is for us to bear our sorrows, so as to leave us perfectly free to discharge our duties faithfully in the world. When the heart becomes too full for the government of the head, the whole system will experience the enervating effects of the ravaging disorder. But I still feel unshaken confidence in the ability which that organ possesses of exercising faith and hope, and regaining its lost energies in the midst of the severest conflicts. Poor Percy! To me it does indeed seem that so far as regards the present world, he is lost to us forever—that his spirit has deserted us for some other sphere, between which and us there is a wide gulf, permitting none to pass save through the gates of death. The reflection is disheartening—'tis painful—and yet we are left in full possession of that glorious thought, that we shall again meet and be happy in an eternal world, where nothing will be able to separate us again!"

Henry Courtland uttered these words like one whose good sense is painfully striving with the melancholy feelings of a wounded spirit. He felt his sorrow—felt it most fully and keenly—but he was determined that its discouraging effects should not rob him of all hope and consolation. If he was not entirely happy, he at least endeavored to render himself cheerful and contented. It was remarkable that at this particular juncture Mr. Russell too, although sorely feeling the intense grief which had been so long preying on his heart, seemed to manifest quite as great a degree of composure and resignation as had been shown by his more philosophical and practical neighbor. Perhaps if his hope had become less, his submission to the divine will had become greater. He formerly demanded that his wishes should be gratified, he now only asked for patience.

Clara tried to derive consolation from the conduct of those whose example she wished to follow. But her own sensitive nature was not so easily brought into subjection to the desires of her will. She was still disposed to complain, although she endeavored not to murmur. On the present occasion she uttered the simple dictates of a sorrowing but gentle bosom.

"I am unhappy," said she, "because in the prime of



life I am left lone and destitute. But my son may yet be living—may yet be restored to the embraces of a mother's love. Thousands of instances have no doubt occurred in the world, where parents and children have been separated for a season, but have met again never to part on this side the grave. Perhaps my child is now on his way to meet me. Perhaps he is anxiously inquiring the direction to this secluded country. And yet whom will he find to put him on the proper course? If he should go to my old residence in the City of New York, he will hardly meet with any person acquainted with my purpose of making this part of the State my permanent dwelling-place. How then will he be able to trace me? Poor boy! perhaps he is now inquiring for me in vain!"

She had scarcely uttered these words before Rowland made his appearance and announced that two or three carriages were approaching from the main road, and would be within sight in a few minutes. The company now hastily withdrew into the large parlor, which formed the principal apartment of Courtland Hall.

"Some of our friends from a distance," said Mr. Courtland as they retired. "It is a lovely day, and I am really glad that we are about to be favored with visitors."

In a very short time the approaching vehicles stopped outside the spacious court or yard which fronted Courtland Hall, and a goodly troop of persons made their way through the center avenue toward the portico from which Mr. Courtland and his friends had just retreated. Rowland acted as usher to announce them at the house, and as soon as he entered the wide entry, threw open the parlor door. A scene of frantic joy and exultation was witnessed a moment afterward. Percy Courtland rushed into the arms of his father, and parent and child mingled their tears of triumph together. Mrs. Courtland fainted away. Agnes Russell clung to the bosom of her parent with an emotion that was indescribable, and her brother took the hand of his father in mute silence, who was only able to say, "God bless you, my dear children! God be praised for this unspeakable pleasure!" It was long before tranquillity was restored to the minds of the members of these two happy families. Every eye was moist, and yet every bosom was ecstatic with joy and gratitude. The



long-lost children had been found again. The weary wanderers were again restored to their homes. The joyful parents were again put in possession of their chief happiness. Such tender felicity—such sudden and ecstatic exultation—will not admit of description. The reader must look on in silence, and embody the picture for himself.

During the warm and passionate interchange of feelings that took place between the parties, whose happy meeting we have attempted faintly to record above, Clara, the daughter of Mrs. Truehope, had retired to a remote corner of the apartment in which they were assembled, and seemed to be deeply affected by the pathetic scenes that were passing before her. Her heart was full, but she uttered not a word of complaint or sorrow. She thought on her own distressing bereavement, but she envied not the restored happiness of those around her. Presently Percy Courtland withdrew to the wide passage or hall, where two or three other individuals had been left waiting at the time the party we have already mentioned entered the parlor. "I have now some friends to introduce," said he, "whom you will no doubt receive with a hearty welcome."

In a moment afterward he returned, leading in a young man whose smiling countenance betrayed the deep joy and satisfaction that was seated in his bosom. But his person had scarcely presented itself at the door, before a loud and piercing cry arose from the far end of the apartment. Clara ran forward, and fell on the neck of Molton Fairview. "My son! my son! my long-lost son!" was all she was able to utter. "My mother! my dear mother!" was all that proceeded from the lips of the young man. The eyes of the whole assembly gazed on the impressive spectacle with wonder and amazement. It was a scene that thrilled through the bosom of every individual present. Mother and child clung to each other with a warmth of feeling that was wild and enthusiastic, until at last they sunk exhausted on a seat which their wondering friends found time to provide for the occasion.

Man is fearfully and wonderfully made. Man's destiny in life is sometimes almost equally wonderful. Here was a denouement of circumstances—a series of apparent accidents—all tending to the same end—all having for their object the same remarkable discovery—which none who



understood them could contemplate but with surprise and astonishment. But it will be best only to record the complete, sudden, and wonderful restoration of parent and child. The reader may imagine the rest from the feelings of his own heart.

There was another incident connected with this remarkable drama which was almost equally surprising. Miss Russell in her turn retired to the hall for the purpose of introducing from thence two of her dearest friends, whom she was anxiously desirous to make acquainted with the company in the parlor. She joyfully conducted into the apartment Mr. Stanley and his daughter. But the instant the former individual presented himself before the company, another exclamation of surprise from Mrs. Truehope astonished the wondering spectators. "Surely," cried that excellent lady, "this is my brother Edward! What a series of wonders are we passing through on this blessed day!"

Stanley was indeed the brother of Mrs. Truehope, but he had lost sight of his sister ever since her first visit to New York, and her voyage immediately afterward to England. This will account for his ignorance of her movements subsequently. Indeed, he had never heard of her return to her native country, and supposed that she still resided in England. Mrs. Truehope retained a distinct recollection of her niece Letitia, but that young lady had changed so much from the lapse of years, that it required some considerable time before her aunt could recall those girlish features of her person with which she had once been so familiar.

It would be an unpardonable omission not to record the part which that simple but heroic girl, Maggy, saw proper to perform in these remarkable proceedings. She remained quietly seated with the other part of the company in the outside passage, and seemed to be modestly waiting her turn to be introduced to her friends in the grand parlor. But so interesting and protracted had been the several interviews that took place between her companions and their friends—so wonderful had been the revelations that had just transpired—that Maggy's quiet and patience at last became completely exhausted. She was no longer able to



withstand the strong desire she felt of witnessing these warm and wonderful recognitions, and of identifying her own feelings with the marvelous events of that day. As soon, therefore, as she heard Mr. Stanley pronounced the brother of Mrs. Truehope, she could contain herself no longer. She rushed into the parlor of her own accord. She was of course cordially greeted and welcomed by her old friends, and was embraced by Mr. and Mrs. Courtland with almost the same warmth that had accompanied the return of their own child. All who were present not only accorded her a hearty welcome, but complimented her because of her courage and heroism, some account of which Agnes Russell was already engaged in furnishing to her eager listeners.

When this was over, Agnes had an additional duty to perform, which she seemed to attend to with even more eagerness and delight than she manifested in regard to any other event that had transpired on that joyful morning. She on a sudden passed out of the parlor with considerable haste, and in a moment afterward introduced to her parents the individual to whom she considered herself more indebted for the happiness they were all enjoying than to any other person. "This," said she, "is our old friend and acquaintance Billy Braxton, the man whom we ought to delight to honor—the man to whom I owe my present enjoyment and my hopes of future felicity. The least we can do is to feel grateful to him for his disinterested kindness and benevolence."

Mr. Russell received his old acquaintance with a hearty greeting. He was of course unable to comprehend the full meaning of the language made use of by Agnes. But he felt too happy on the occasion not to reward their alleged benefactor with the overflowings of his own grateful heart. He begged him to accept his sincere thanks for the benefits acknowledged to have been received from him by his daughter, and gave him the assurance of a more hearty and extended gratitude whenever he should become fully informed of the particular acts of kindness which he had shown toward her.

We are not to suppose that the appearance of Braxton occasioned but little surprise to the parties with whom he was now brought in contact. Mr. Russell indeed had al-



ready become somewhat familiar with that remarkable change so striking in the person and behavior of his old acquaintance, but Mr. and Mrs. Courtland could not but regard this change as something very extraordinary. It was evident that their old friend Billy Braxton had become an entirely different person from what they knew him to be only two or three years before. So remarkable was this change that they could not help feeling a high degree of awkwardness in his presence, or rather perhaps a consciousness of that sort of restraint which carries with it something of awe and reverence. While they regarded his language and appearance with wonder and surprise, the only outward token they gave of the internal workings of their own minds was an expressive silence.

There remained yet to be introduced to our happy circle that free-hearted and good-natured individual, Darsie Hopkins, together with a personage of somewhat higher distinction, but perhaps of scarcely a nobler heart, I mean Ex-Governor Cartwright. These two gentlemen were attached to the company which had so joyfully and so unexpectedly arrived at Courtland Hall on that memorable day, and had imparted such sudden happiness to its languid and almost desponding inmates. The first was received with the welcome due to a new acquaintance, who is likely to become a permanent and valuable friend. The last was hailed, by Mr. Courtland at least, as a man in whose company and conversation he had found great delight on a previous occasion, and whom he was now disposed to meet with the warmest feelings of attachment and enthusiasm. Both were welcomed as guests in whom the whole family would feel the deepest interest, and would take the sincerest pleasure to honor and make happy.

“I feel rejoiced now,” said Henry Courtland, after the excitement of this unlooked-for meeting had somewhat abated, “I feel a much greater degree of satisfaction now than I deserve, or had any reason to expect. Indeed, my weakness was scarcely excusable—it was sinful. But I will not suffer my regrets to aggravate that which cannot now be helped, and which would only have a tendency to destroy my present enjoyments. It will be more wise to receive these blessings, so kindly bestowed by our heavenly Parent, with an humble and grateful heart. I am happy



now, and I feel it to be the will of that same heavenly Parent that I should continue so."

Our good farmer, as the reader will imagine, was now brought into excellent humor with himself as well as with all around him. His generous qualities, as is always the case with genius and good sense, immediately began to seek for occasions to make others happy. What he so highly enjoyed himself he longed to impart to those around him. "They cannot," said he, "fully enter into my own feelings. It is impossible they should understand the profoundness of my humility, the warmth of my gratitude, or the exquisite sense I entertain of the divine goodness. But what I cannot get them to understand internally, they may at least partake of naturally. What they are unable to enjoy at its fountain-head, they may be able to taste at its remoter issues. My troubles began with a feast—I am determined they shall end in the same way. In a few days my friends shall be as happy as social hilarity and good cheer can make them."

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## CHAPTER LVI.

It was in honor of Percy Courtland's birthday, as our readers well remember, that the feast to which his father alluded in the foregoing chapter was got up with so much parade and ceremony, and it was in honor of the restoration of the same individual to the parental roof that another entertainment was now being provided equally rich, tasty, and magnificent. It was arranged that all the newly-arrived guests at Courtland Hall should remain there for the purpose of partaking of this splendid festival. Mrs. Courtland became even busier than before in attending to the preliminaries of this glorious repast. Nor was Maggy's handiwork in relation to the matter much less necessary and important. She exerted herself with an alertness and vigor which showed that she entered with a new zest on the discharge of her old duties. She gave renewed evidence of that good-humored pleasantry which on



the former occasion she had displayed to so much advantage, and of which she still retained a distinct recollection. She even went so far as playfully to remind Braxton of the humble part he had seen proper to assume on the occasion in question. "I am just as ready now as I was then," said she, "to furnish you with a few crackers to stay the cravings of your appetite, should you happen this time again to be put off with a late dinner. But in return for my kindness I shall expect you, as before, to promise to be present and dance at my wedding." Whether Braxton's eye this time glowed with that peculiar fiery expression, with which Maggy professed to have made herself so familiar, we have had no means to inquire. But as that gentleman felt, like the friends by whom he was surrounded, that he had in a great measure surmounted the difficulties which had imparted a somewhat marked bias to his character, and as he was now strongly impressed with the prevailing good humor of the merry company at Courtland Hall, there is the less reason to believe that he took even the slightest offense at the sly pleasantry of his old friend Maggy. Billy Braxton had become a new man in more senses than one.

The day at length arrived when our friendly and cheerful guests sat down to the generous feast provided for them by Henry Courtland and his lady. We will not undertake to enter into the particulars of this sumptuous entertainment. We will only say that in one important feature, perhaps, it was distinguished from all other entertainments, whether ancient or modern. It was partaken of by a circle of guests, whose happiness and good humor could hardly have been equaled in the same number of persons convened together anywhere for a similar purpose. Every brow was smooth—every heart was cheerful. It was just such a circle where it might be certain that good digestion would wait on appetite.

"This," said Governor Cartwright to his friend Henry Courtland, who sat next to him, "is what I call comfortable—nay, it is excellent and edifying—not so much on account of the viands that are so tastefully served up and so abundantly placed before us, as on account of the remarkable circumstances they are intended to commemorate."



Every one within the hearing of his voice seemed to be deeply impressed with the truth of this observation. A momentary silence was the immediate consequence. Henry Courtland raised his eyes upward as if engaged in returning thanks for so many distinguished blessings. The looks of Percy and Agnes met, and a generous tear moistened the cheek of each of them. Clara Fairview glanced in tenderness toward her son, whose expressive countenance showed how deeply he could reciprocate her own feelings. But lest this generous sympathy should grow more tender and mournful than suited the occasion, Henry Courtland produced a change in the character of the conversation by proceeding to say,—

“Well, Governor, I believe I have not yet been exactly informed how you all came to take passage in the same vessel, and how it happened that we have the exceeding great honor of entertaining you as guests on this joyful occasion.”

“Your question is easily answered,” said the ex-governor. “We all happened to become wearied of California, as we all happened to close our respective missions to that distant country about the same time. It was therefore soon arranged among us that we should embark for the City of New York, and sail home together. The events in which our mutual feelings, if not our destinies, had been so remarkably involved, and in which we experienced such a deep interest, seemed to endear us to each other. When we arrived at the end of our voyage, we were happy to know that our course, with the exception of that contemplated by Mr. Braxton, and by our young friends Hopkins and Fairview, lay pretty much in the same direction. But the two first seemed to have no determined scheme in view, and the last met with a severe disappointment in not being able to discover any certain traces of his mother. Under these circumstances we all received a very pressing invitation from your son, and from Miss Russell and her brother, to come up here, and rest a few days from the fatigues to which we had been necessarily exposed during our voyage, and indeed before we left California. So far as regards myself, I feel assured that I could have done nothing better, and this assurance, I have no doubt, is as cheerfully echoed by every one of



our fellow-voyagers who on the present happy occasion are now so joyfully partaking of your hospitality."

"Nothing, I am persuaded," returned Mr. Courtland, "could have added more to our pleasure to-day than the honor we have of entertaining such welcome guests. But while our cup of enjoyment is now full, we cannot but remember with some kind of regret the painful disappointment we experienced in not hearing oftener from those who were so dear to us. The silence so obstinately persisted in caused us almost as much anxiety and sorrow as if we had been circumstantially informed of the remarkable events that were transpiring around them."

"For my own part," said Agnes, "I am sure I would have written a hundred times had I been convinced that by so doing I could have imparted happiness to a single bosom. But while I felt that it was impossible my letters should become the means of pleasure, I was unwilling to make them the instruments of pain."

"Humph!" replied Mr. Courtland. "That, after all, was laying down for yourself a rule of very doubtful propriety. And what have you to say for yourself, Alfred? You, unhappily, were no less rigidly reserved than your sister."

"And for almost precisely the same reasons," observed Alfred Russell. "But if, as you seem to think, we may both be justly held censurable for our conduct, it may be that my own was not entirely inexcusable. Part of the time, you know, I was sick, and of course could not have written, however strong might have been my inclination."

"I do not blame you for your inability when sick, but for your negligence when well. I suppose, however, we are bound to let you pass, without making use of any very severe terms of censure. But here now is Percy. Doubtless he can furnish us with a stronger and better reason than any we have yet had the pleasure of listening to."

"Alas, sir!" exclaimed Percy, "I am afraid that my own excuse, if I should attempt to frame one, would be considered by you as even weaker than any that has been presented by my companions."

"And yet," said his father, "I must believe that it was sufficient to satisfy your own mind."

"Nay," replied Percy, "in entertaining such a belief you



are entirely mistaken. It was pride—shame—a reluctance to own to myself and to others that I had succeeded so badly in the world—that prevented me from communicating with my friends.”

“But you seem to make this confession now with the utmost candor,” answered his father. “And to tell you the truth, I am greatly pleased with it. It was precisely that noble frankness which I had a right to expect from my dear son Percy. And now I am disposed to believe it would gratify the whole company to hear your present opinion about that choice of life which you made two years ago, and in regard to which, if you had to do it over again, you would perhaps hesitate much longer before making up your mind to pursue the same course.”

“It is certainly not very pleasant,” answered Percy, “to make an open avowal of our own faults and blunders, nor indeed would it be always prudent to do so. But if my individual experience could be made to impart but one-tenth part of the benefit to others that I feel conscious it has been the means of conferring on myself, then I am sure that I ought to speak out, even if it should be at the expense of some little shame and disadvantage to my better feelings.”

“Exactly so,” said his father. “I find that you have not forgotten the lessons of your early years. Come, sir, tell us in a few words what you think of yourself now.”

“Well,” returned Percy, “I think I shall hardly be tempted again to go in pursuit of those fancied advantages which are so flatteringly held out to us young folks by the world. As to selecting a calling or profession for myself in life, I feel now perfectly satisfied that I could hardly make a wiser choice than to retain that into which I have been at least partially initiated. Other callings may indeed appear to be more profitable or more genteel. They may be more showy, and apparently engross to themselves a sphere of wider influence and more respectability. But are they in reality more useful or more prosperous? Are they calculated to make men essentially more dignified or more happy? I have not willingly neglected the study of mankind and their pursuits while abroad, and while my attention has been attracted by the outward glitter and show of some employments above others, I have by no



means been convinced that the most plausible and imposing are those which are the most to be coveted. A sensible man will pay more regard to the uses of his employment—to its capability of multiplying the real blessings of life—to its aptitude in increasing the means of human happiness—than to the mere deceptive show by which it is surrounded.”

“You are right, my son!” exclaimed his father. “You are a thousand times right! How I rejoice to see that you have been brought to take a rational and practical view of a subject of so much importance! It would only require that there should be a few young men with sentiments like your own in every community, *in order that the great profession of the agriculturist should acquire that character and respectability in the world which it so justly merits.*”

This exclamation was uttered by Henry Courtland with all that warmth and enthusiasm which characterized the strong love which he felt for his own darling profession—a love that now beamed from his eyes, and was depicted in every expression of his countenance. Nor was this feeling scarcely less strong in the minds of those who were partaking of his hospitality, and sharing his happiness. The face of Agnes Russell wore a smile of complacent gratulation, which went to show that she shared deeply and seriously the same spirit of enthusiasm. Stanley and Hopkins seemed to respond in the same way to the sentiments that had just been uttered, and Molton Fairview looked at his mother with a pleasure so satisfied and triumphant, that she was assured what had been said met with his hearty approval. Even Braxton gave unequivocal evidence of having entered into the general feeling. But it was Governor Cartwright who imbibed the fullest measure of his friend Henry Courtland’s enthusiasm. “Your devotion to a cause of so much magnitude,” said he, “and in which every American citizen especially ought to feel a deep and abiding interest, would do honor to a much younger man. What an important revolution it would create in the great affairs of our country, if all men could be brought to see this subject in the same light that it is regarded by yourself!”

“And yet,” replied Courtland, “who does not see that it would not do for people generally to cherish my own



enthusiasm? In that case too many would direct all their powers and energies to a single pursuit, and we should become a nation of farmers instead of having our attention equally divided between the diversified employments and purposes of civilized life. I have never so much contended for an increase in the number of our agriculturists, as I have for a proper estimate of their peculiar advantages, and for a corresponding elevation of their tastes, habits, and enjoyments."

"And it seems to me," said the ex-governor, "that there is another reason why we should not give too much encouragement to an inconsiderate and wild admiration of a country life. There are hundreds of young men so poor in the world that it would be utterly impossible for them, on first arriving at manhood, to acquire title to even the smallest piece of ground they might wish to call their own. This should be well considered by all young persons who are disposed to cultivate a taste for agricultural pursuits. If they are poor, and entirely dependent on their own resources, unless they possess an energy and perseverance that are given but to few, there is great danger that they will never rise above the vulgar level of an ordinary day laborer. Such a situation is certainly not the most desirable. It may suit the disposition of some minds, for there must always be men in the world to till the ground. But it is hardly compatible with the feelings of other classes, even where there is no energy and no ambition."

"I am disposed to agree with you in this view of our subject," rejoined Henry Courtland, "which only shows that we are to exercise prudence and caution in the choice of any profession. But Percy has made his choice, and I rejoice that on taking all things into consideration we must come to the conclusion that he has made a good one."

It is not our purpose to give any further particulars of the doings and sayings that characterized the company on this joyful occasion. We know that all hearts were glad—we have reason to believe that all understandings were enlightened. There was a feeling of benevolence and good humor pervading every mind, and a sincere desire on the part of the whole multitude to render each other happy.

Reader, we have brought our story, such as it is, to a close. We have endeavored to point a moral as well as to adorn a



tale. But our purpose perhaps has been more to instruct than amuse. If our simple narrative has taught you the uses of adversity—if you have been led to exercise a more enlightened faith in the dealings of an overruling Providence—if you have seen how well the nobility of virtue may become the most unpretending station—if you have learned how wise it is to confess our faults, and to return from our wanderings to a new career of activity and usefulness—then we can only say that the accomplishment of this is precisely what we have all along aimed at, although it is greatly more than our feeble hopes could have anticipated.

But perhaps you will think that our tale has terminated too abruptly, and may feel a strong desire to be made acquainted with the subsequent fortunes of at least some, if not all, of the prominent individuals who have found a place in our story. In order to gratify this curiosity, if any such should exist, it is necessary for us to add a page or two more of matter by way of appendix.

It was a considerable time after the period at which our tale closes that Percy Courtland, on a bright summer day, was sitting in the large parlor of Courtland Hall, surrounded by three or four healthy young children, and playfully looking over the shoulders of a lady who was busily employed in writing, and who appeared to be nearly of the same age with himself. His father and mother, as well as his old friend and neighbor Mr. Russell, had been dead for several years, and in a cheerful and ripe old age had calmly resigned the world, with all its joys and sorrows, to those who were to come after them.

“My dear Agnes,” said Percy, “you seem to be as busy as ever in making entries in your journal, and yet I am scarcely able to see why you should put yourself to so much trouble. Nobody is certainly made the wiser by your labor, as I believe nobody but yourself is ever permitted to read a single page that you seem to find such extreme pleasure in writing.”

“And supposing,” replied Agnes, “that I alone could be benefited by the record I am making, and which I commenced the very day after our happy marriage, that of itself would be a sufficient compensation for the labor I bestow on it. But the truth is I am vain enough to think,



should the Lord see proper to remove me first to the spiritual world, that this journal may prove hereafter of some little benefit both to yourself and our dear children. Nay, even now I should have no objection to your perusing a stray leaf occasionally. If I thought the entry I have just succeeded in making would interest you, I am sure I would read it to you with the greatest pleasure."

"Oh, do let me hear it!" cried Percy; "you know I value everything that flows from your own pen."

"Then listen," said Agnes. "The remarks I have just made on the paper before me, have been suggested to my mind by hearing this morning, as you know, of the death of Mrs. Truehope." Agnes then took up her journal and proceeded to read as follows:

"We have just received intelligence of the death of our old friend, Mrs. Truehope. She was present at our wedding, and was one of the happy guests who, a few months before, was so kindly and generously entertained at the feast got up on our return from California by Percy's father. The remembrance of this famous festival awakens in my mind a fresh sense of the many blessings we have since enjoyed, of the many dangers we had just then escaped, and of the many friends from whom we occasionally hear, and whose happiness and prosperity in life continue to rejoice our own hearts. Mr. Stanley's health became completely restored after his return to the State of New York, and he still ministers affectionately to a small congregation which he took charge of soon after our marriage. His daughter Letitia was courted and wedded by Harry, the brother of my dear Percy, and they are now living in this neighborhood, enjoying every blessing that we all knew would follow that happy union.—Her friend Virginia Truehope appears to be as passionately devoted as ever to the study of botany, and now that her mother is dead will in all probability seek to become an inmate in our own family. It is said by some that she is receiving the addresses of Darsie Hopkins, whose age would seem to be about equal with her own, and whose reputation, as a man of business and integrity in a neighboring town, has been most happily growing with his years.—Mr. Braxton (our own dear Billy Braxton) has retired from a lucrative business, and his greatest delight now is to exercise his talents



and to manage his wealth in such a way as will render him most useful to his fellow-men. He especially feels a sincere concern for the welfare of the rising generation, and is ever devising schemes for the promotion of youthful virtue and the assistance of youthful talent. He frequently makes it a point to visit the neighborhood of Courtland Hall, where he spent some of the earliest years of his life, and whenever this is the case, he is sure to make our own dwelling his home. We could not be honored by a more worthy or a more agreeable guest—My brother Alfred, who realized some wealth when in California, is now residing on the farm we inherited from our deceased father, and has become one of the most prominent and active citizens of our county. He is fond of dealing in all kinds of live stock, and is celebrated at the fairs held in the surrounding country for the superior specimens furnished by him of the choicest breed of animals. Alfred is not yet married, and I am sometimes almost tempted to deny him the happiness which I believe he finds in our own family, in order that he may be led to seek in the friendship and regard of a more tender connection for a happiness of his own.—Maggy, my own faithful and devoted Maggy, since the death of Mrs. Courtland, has become to us not so much a servant whom we employ, as an humble friend and companion whom we love and esteem. Nothing but death, I am persuaded, will ever separate us.—Rowland, too, like a worn-out courser, is resting from the fatigues and troubles of life in that snug little cottage which Harry thought he could hardly expect to enjoy as an old bachelor, but which has been provided for him as an affectionate return for his long-continued and faithful services. ‘Blow me,’ exclaimed Rowland, on first taking possession of his cottage, ‘if I did not know that my dreams would be fulfilled, and the remainder of my days be made happy!’

“In thus making a very brief statement of the circumstances attending those noble and kind-hearted individuals who were formerly my best friends in adversity, I must not forget the names of Ex-Governor Cartwright and Molton Fairview. The former entered into a full appreciation of the merits of the latter, and kindly invited him to his own home for the purpose of enabling him to seek his fortune in the West. There, I am informed, they are



at present both realizing the full extent of their hopes and wishes. The ex-governor is becoming more and more a highly distinguished, if not a great man, and Molton is said to be fast following in his footsteps. The latter continues to cherish his warm and early attachment for his parent, and mother and son are living together in the utmost happiness. Molton no doubt has remained single principally on that account, but it is now reported that he is soon to be married to the only daughter of that kind friend and patron to whom he has been already indebted for so many favors."

When Agnes finished reading the foregoing statements, Percy expressed himself highly pleased with the entries she had just made in her journal. "This kind of information," said he, "may indeed become interesting hereafter. But," he continued, "you have omitted in your recital the mention of one character who figured prominently in the drama to which your journal alludes. You do not tell us what became of Captain Lamberton."

"Oh!" exclaimed Agnes, "I am well aware of that, but I am not sure that such a statement ought to find admission into my journal. I look back on the fate of Captain Lamberton with pity—with grief—with almost astonishment. I am not willing to make a record of the truth. It is sufficient that you and I are acquainted with the melancholy fact, that soon after his return from California he became perfectly deranged, and died in a lunatic asylum in the City of New York."

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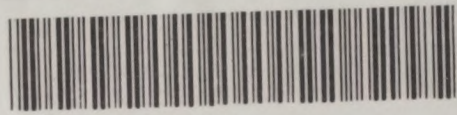








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